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THE EBONY ROOM





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THE EBONY ROOM.

4

THE EBONY ROOM;

OR,

CHRISTMAS PASTIME.

BY

E. M. B.



DEDICATED TO THE YOUNG OF EVERY HOME.

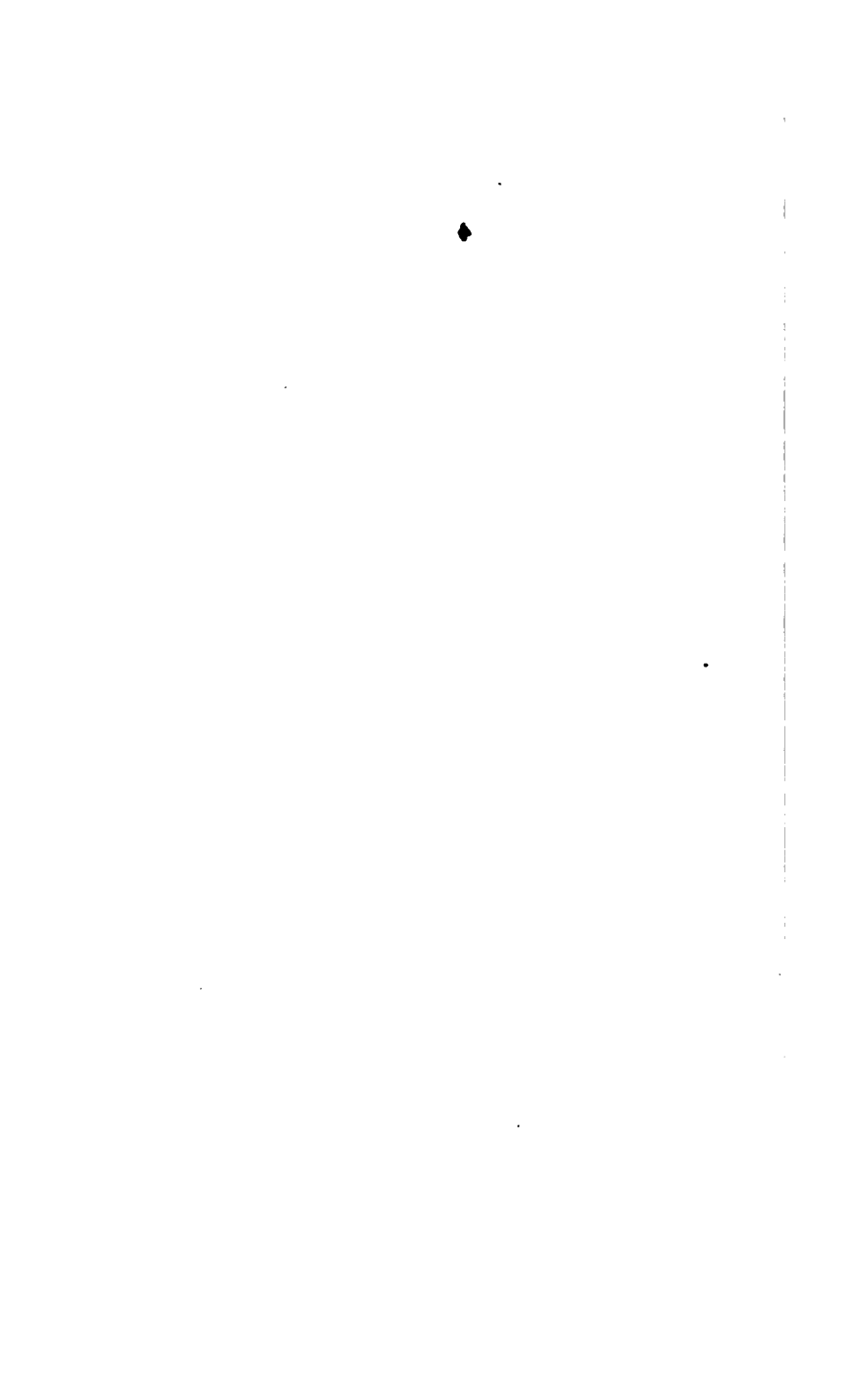
"I have lifted the curtain of memory, and smoothed the pillow of
rest;
Mystery has left her echoes in my mind, and I discoursed her
secrets."

LONDON:

G. J. PALMER, 32, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

1868.

270. g 225.



THE EBONY ROOM.

"Two worlds are ours : 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within
Plain as the sea and sky.
Thou, Who hast given us eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give us a heart to find out Thee,
And read Thee everywhere."

PASSING the bounds of one of Ireland's best situated cities, and following the course of its beautiful river as it descends towards the sea, the first object that deserves attention is the Castle Island. On its north the channel is wide but shallow, on its south a winding stream of greater depth separates it from the opposite bank.

This island contains about three hundred acres of good land, and on the part of it that faces the mouth of the harbour is situated an ancient castle. From this spot an extensive view may be seen of the city, course of the noble river, and the adjacent counties, with their picturesque mountains, the natural beauties of the place being heightened by the well-wooded banks of the river on each side.

The castle, evidently intended as a place of strength, and erected in the sixteenth century, is still in good preservation, having always been occupied by its owners: a branch of the once powerful Desmond family.

The exterior of the castle denoted the unsettled state of the times when it was built. The principal entrance was through a small gothic doorway defended by a projecting oriel window that commanded the approach, itself being protected by a sloping battlement against assailants.

There was plainly to be seen the usual aperture in the stonework through which molten lead, boiling oil, and the various warlike missiles of those barbarous ages were wont to be cast upon the heads of the hapless invaders.

A human face rudely cut in stone and a nearly defaced escutcheon were inserted in the wall a few feet from the ground on each side of the pointed archway. Narrow windows and loopholes at regular distances gave a faint light to a flight of stone steps which, winding through the massive walls, conducted to the top of the old building. From this place the view is lovely and extended. The city lies in the distance, with its towers and steeples appearing as if rising out of the river, which winds gracefully between cultivated and wooded hills until it reaches the "Castle Island," where it divides into a double stream enclosing the island and uniting again below it: thence it proceeds to receive its tributary streams, which soon swell

it to the rapid fulness that characterises its course to the ocean, into which it drops a few miles farther on.

At various times the Castle had been fitted up and used as a summer residence by the proprietors, but the greater part of every year they lived in their English home, possessing quite as large estates in England as in Ireland, where their only abode being on the Castle Isle they did not feel disposed to live in winter with no way of getting out of it except by a boat. Although this singularly circumstanced domain was never visited by Mr. Desmond and his family except in summer, yet it had been the only home of his mother from the time of her husband's death; she seldom left it, and spent her time and money in doing good. Old Lady Desmond, as she was called by all around, and "Grandmamma Desmond," or "Granny," by those near and dear to her heart, was one of the very nicest old ladies in the world. She was tall and stately, and must have been very handsome in her youth, for in spite of the many chances and changes of this mortal life that no doubt she had met with during the cloud and sunshine of her "three score years and ten," she was still fair to look upon. It was the beauty of age—of the hoary head—of one who had nearly drained life's cup and yet had not found it all bitterness. There was a gentle benevolent expression on her face which seemed to say "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." I do not mean to imply that this noble lady

had not met sorrow, for from such in life's journey, be it long or short, none are exempt, and the shadowy sadness that rested on her thoughtful brow, although it gave a softened depth to her varying expression, yet plainly told its unmistakable tale of trial.

Grandmamma's only constant companion was her daughter Eva. The rest of a once large circle having dispersed, each forming a separate home as is usually the case with families. It was late in the autumn, and when suddenly its blasts grew wintry, "Granny's" heart failed her at the idea of crossing the sea to spend Christmas, as she had promised to do, at her son's English home. She therefore wrote proposing instead that he and his family should come and pass it with her on the Castle Isle.

Granny pleaded her cause, and put her case so well, that the letter containing this bold request had only to be read in the English home for father and mother, with the six children, to unite in one heart and voice exclaiming, "Dear Granny must be pleased; let us all start at once."

"And won't it be real fun being snowed up in the old Irish Castle and making Granny tell us all kinds of wonderful stories," said merry little Edgar, who was about ten years of age and the youngest of the party.

In due time Mr. Desmond with his family and attendants arrived at Granny's home. A very great event it was considered in the neighbourhood, and all sorts of preparations went on at the Castle, most likely such as the old walls had never before known. It

was, as all the world know, holiday time, every lesson-book shut up and all the tutors and governesses gone to enjoy their own fireside.

The unusual thickness of the walls of the Castle might have insured perfect dryness in the interior, but Granny, to prevent the possibility of any damp, as well as to please her eye, had ordered all the rooms to be panelled, each room being called by the name of the wood with which it was lined; thus there were the Cedar Room, the Maple Room, the Walnut, the Rosewood, the Mahogany Rooms—the common and home woods being reserved for the domestic rooms of the Castle. Granny was one to turn everything to some use, and the frequent wrecks on the neighbouring coasts supplied (too often) a large quantity and variety of drift wood which, when washed on the island by the waves, was legally the property of the island's owner.

But of all the rooms in this singular Castle the most beautiful and decorated, but probably unlike any other room that even the greatest traveller could have met with, was Grandmamma Desmond's own sitting apartment, called "The Ebony Room." It was lined, floored, and furnished with real ebony that had been cast at her very door from the wreck of an East Indian ship on a Christmas Day many years before the one we are now telling about.

This most picturesque of all the rooms in the old building was lofty and well-proportioned, it lay in the seaward turret of the Castle, whose small windows and thick walls proved that it had originally been built for defence.

This room was now panelled in most parts with ebony, a silver beading dividing each compartment, and so preventing the black looking too sombre ; wherever the panelling stopped it was for the purpose of admitting a bookcase or cabinet of the same wood inlaid with ivory. Beautiful wood carving adorned the massive chimney-piece and its roof was richly emblazoned with the armorial bearings of a long line of the Desmonds.

Figures carved in wood supported the chimney-piece on each side of the high wide-open fireplace, where in the absence of the usual grate the bright fire of wood and turf blazed on the hearth. The ebony floor was polished until it reflected like a mirror ; the seats of various forms and design were all made of ebony, but inlaid with silver or ivory, and well cushioned with embroidery-work done by "Granny's" own fingers.

Before each seat was laid a rug or a piece of tapestry over the bright flooring to insure comfort, a thing good Granny always remembered. There was a strange combination of ancient and modern taste displayed in this Ebony Room, and we have been thus minute in describing it in order that our readers may enter it with us and spend six pleasant evenings there, enjoying a pastime that Grandmamma Desmond had planned for the amusement of her grandchildren.

The room was full of those many comforts which such a woman as Granny would be sure to gather around her even in unlikely places ; here and there on the panels, interspersed with old pictures (each with its tradition or true history), hung also tapestry ones of

priceless value, and half concealed by them were many of the spoils of warfare on the neighbouring coast brought hither generations back, some of them strange looking weapons, one a ponderous axe,—such things as are not usually to be seen in a lady's room.

From the time Mr. Desmond and his family had arrived at the Castle until Christmas Day the weather, though cold, was quite outable, and therefore there was not a nook, corner, nor farm on the island left unexplored by the young people.

Three hundred acres make but a small island, yet we may call it a large domain, and the Desmonds took several days to walk over it and pay visits to the cottagers and houses belonging to Granny's several dependants, namely the labourers and their families. The steward and his, the gardener's, the washer-woman's, each home comfortable, as everybody and everything was sure to be that Granny had any power over.

The prettiest to look at of these small homes was the boatman's, a castellated building close to the water's edge and opposite to the nearest point of the mainland, and where the ferry though the deepest part was the narrowest. Here lived Turlo, the chief boatman, and he and his three sons were always supposed to be ready with the steady four-oared boat at any hour of day or night that Grandmamma Desmond or any of her household might require it. She used to order her boat as readily as other ladies would their carriages ; but she was not without these also. She

had a pony carriage to take her drives on the island, and she had her carriage and horses that lived on the mainland comfortably put up close to the little parish church that stood directly opposite to the boat-house. It was a rare thing that wind or rain were severe enough to prevent her and Aunt Eva attending divine service every time the clear bell summoned all to prayer. When Lady Desmond and her daughter took distant drives the weather was never known to prevent them returning to their island home before nightfall.

The novelty of passing Christmas in such a different home and manner from that to which Mr. Desmond and his family had been hitherto accustomed had its charms, especially to the younger members of it. And the island was not at all dull, the constant passing of ships, boats, steamers, in adding variety to the scene, gave a life and interest to everything.

But the day after Christmas the weather became of unexampled severity, and a deep fall of snow prevented all attempts at any further out-of-door amusement. The leaden hues of the water and sky formed a strange contrast to the white snow mantle which wrapped the shores, while the opposite coast stood out as it were into the river with the distinct outline and startling appearance of nearness peculiar to an atmosphere charged with a coming snow-storm, hastened on by a bitter north-east blast.

Shut up in an old Irish castle on a small island during a violent snow-storm, with every prospect of its continuing some time, Granny thought of a plan calculated

to amuse and interest all her party; not an easy matter when the oldest was seventy and Edgar the youngest (ten years old) of the party assembled.

Great was the excitement as the evening drew nigh to know what could be Granny's new way of amusing them, for having had free access to the Ebony Room since their arrival they had become well acquainted with its contents, and had been storing up in memory all the old stories that Granny had told them, in order to astonish their English friends. Many of these old Irish tales, some true some traditional, might amuse you readers also, but as it is unlikely that any of you will visit the "Island Castle," or see the Ebony Room that overlooks the stormy river, or look at the strange old pictures of people you have never heard of, it cannot be expected that their adventures would interest you as much as what we are about to tell.

Tea was over although the hour was only seven o'clock. In the stillness of the white world outside, every word uttered in the Ebony Room, where all was warmth and a blaze of light, could be heard. One table was drawn before the crackling wood fire, dear old Grandmamma herself was seated at one side of the hearth, her son at the opposite one, his wife taking her place beside Granny—these two ladies had their knitting. Aunt Eva with the six young people were arranged round the table, on which stood a lamp, some work, and books, one of them with silver clasps lay before Aunt Eva, who appeared only to wait for permission from Grandmamma

to unclasp it, and read the contents. Gerald, the eldest of the young party, was eighteen, Edgar the youngest; Kathleen, Mary, Norah, and Harold came between, and any of you readers who may make a guess at their exact ages cannot be much astray in the calculation. Grandmamma first broke the silence by saying "My dear children, what can you expect an old woman of three score years and ten to do towards amusing such a merry set as you all are? My fingers are no longer nimble, or else I might take that pretty little Irish harp which stands in the window and play a merry tune on it—my voice is not able to sing to its accompaniment. I could not possibly run about and join in your favourite games of hide and seek, four-cornered fool, or blind man's buff; besides, even if I could do so, this room would not admit of such frolics, every nook being already filled. Will you believe me when I say that old as I am Granny's brains are the most active part of her now, and so it has come to pass she has mysteriously woven the history of real things into enigmas for you to guess. Of course the information given on each subject is fairly disguised, but none of you, not excepting Edgar, can be ignorant of the leading parts of each topic. Aunt Eva will read one of my enigmas every evening this week, seated as we now are, and the solving of each is expected to come out in the conversation and remarks made; everyone may give his or her ideas as best they can; there need be no laughing at anybody's attempt at a guess. No doubt some of you will be guilty of some

absurd remark before the picture stands out perfect, as rather than allow it to remain imperfect I intend to give the finishing touches myself before the evening ends ; but I hope you will all be very bright, guess well, and spare me the trouble."

While Aunt Eva was unclasping the book she begged that no one might interrupt her until she had concluded reading Grandmamma's enigma.

ENIGMA I.

"The world was yet in its infancy when the first of my tribe came to gladden the earth by its presence. Having survived the Deluge I am still living, and strange to tell, Time, the universal destroyer, has but increased my powers and heightened my beauty. I adorn every place I appear in, even when silent, have influence, being keeper of that 'mysterious key which ope's the gate of memory.' Though perfectly content to remain quiet, I am never unwilling to be brought forward by kind friends and admirers, and allow myself to be drawn out at their pleasure, echoing every various feeling they impart to me in full sympathy with their joys or sorrows. I have been quite as often the chosen companion of the king as of the peasant. I have dwelt in palaces and been a homeless wanderer. I have been as much needed and used for the cloister as on the battle field ; for the court as well as for the camp : devoted to the very highest purposes and yet wished for and approved of by the greatest votaries of Terpsichore. My garb has

been as varied as my fortunes ; it has been at times homely, rough, and dark, and then handsome, chaste, nay, even brilliant ; my head has been well accustomed to a crown, and frequent homage given to me. When words were useless and force vain, I have gained my point and found my way through dungeon walls, prison bars, and guards of soldiers. In truth all below must feel me, and there is an ancient record stating the fact of my trying my strength against one of the 'unseen powers of darkness' and prevailing. Having lingered so long through the past my natural tone is melancholy, yet I never refuse to add brilliancy to the present ; and having softened down the rugged road of life to many, am myself leaning on a hope that when time itself must die, I shall but take my place in that Better Land where, through the countless ages of Eternity, my voice may resound for ever."

For some moments after Aunt Eva had finished reading there was silence. Gerald was the first to break it by exclaiming—

"I feel certain that music has something to do with the mystery, and yet I feel equally sure that music as a reply would not suit."

"Certainly not," said little Edgar, "for this thing has a head and wears a crown, and when silent has influence ; and if silent there could be no sound of music."

"Well said, Edgar," remarked Grandmamma, who seated in her chimney-corner, was quietly noting each guess made upon her Enigma.

"What an odd old creature it must be," said Kathleen, "to be still living, and yet the world was in its infancy when it began to exist."

"Oh, Kathleen," cried Harold, "don't you see it says, 'When the first of my tribe came to gladden the earth by its presence;' the first may be dead long ago, and yet its descendants living."

Thoughtful Mary was all this time mentally going through everything animate and inanimate that had passed into the Ark, thinking that must prove a certain clue to the Enigma, said, "'Having survived the deluge, I am still living.' What could this antediluvian creature be like?"

"Well, it must be the strangest-thing that ever was formed," said Nora, who had allowed her brothers and sisters to give their separate ideas before venturing hers; "it has a body and a head, is alive and expects to live for ever, has a voice, and has beauty that improves instead of spoiling by the effects of time."

Gerald's next remark was respecting this extraordinary creature's strength, for it "tried its powers against the unseen powers of darkness, and prevailed."

"Surely, Gerald, those must be 'the evil spirits;'" said little Edgar, half afraid of his remark.

"Yes, my child," said Mr. Desmond.

Gerald.—"I cannot guess it; just as I feel sure of being near it something occurs in the next sentence to upset my idea."

Grandmamma.—"And yet, dear children, one short word is the answer; and I have not distorted its sense

as is often done in commonplace riddles. Neither have I mis-spelled the word but I have given the history of a thing which is well known to all of you : you have admired its beauty, heard its voice, felt its power, it is one of the brightest things in this Ebony Room, and though it has been in courts, camps, monks' cells, and amid the gayest scenes, it is equally at home when the companion of kings as of peasants ; the only difference being that its garb is always suited to each position, which is quite right."

Gerald ventured on a more cheerful remark than his last, saying, "It says it is 'the mysterious keeper of the key which ope's the gate of memory.' I ought to know the quotation well as it is from my favourite Alaric Watts' verses on Music, and the next lines are

'Oft in thy wildest, simplest strain,
We live o'er years of bliss again.'

And the last lines say,

'To gloom or sadness thou can'st suit,
The chords of thy delicious lute ;
For every heart thou hast a tone,
Making its sadness all thine own.'

I still harp on music as the answer, and yet it won't satisfy me."

Grandmamma.—"You are coming very near guessing it now."

Harold.—"I see, I see it ; all but in one or two points which Granny will explain : I am sure Harp is the answer, the true but disguised history of the Harp."

Grandmamma.—"Well, dear merry hearts, Harp is

the answer to my Enigma ; but some of you look as much puzzled as before Harold said it. I am ready and willing to explain it in any part that is still obscure, for I consider some of the remarks made were very clever, especially so, to guess the real thing in spite of all the disguising I dressed it in."

Gerald.—"I cannot make out when or where 'the Harp' is first named, but I know it is a very ancient instrument."

Grandmamma.—"It is the first one named in a Record of undoubted authority. The world truly was in its infancy when so early as in the fourth chapter of the Book of Genesis and twenty-first verse, we read 'that Jubal was the father of all such as handle "the Harp" and "Organ."' All through the sacred volume it is constantly alluded to, either literally or metaphorically. In the early ages the Harp or Lyre was a rude looking instrument, generally made of rough coarse wood, having then a very different garb from what in the course of time it gradually assumed, until it has come to be the decorated instrument it now is. Although the little Irish Harp which stands in this room (continued Grandmamma) is very simple in comparison to the beautiful blue and gold French one that your mother has at home, yet examine mine and see how pretty it is, made of Irish bog oak, surmounted with silver and a crown of silver shamrock leaves, with an emerald in the centre of each. May we not call the Harp a keeper of music, for if it stands near an open window the slightest breeze

passing over the strings causes the most melancholy wail ; and have none of you remembered the Æolian Harp that during Summer-time is always placed in the south window of this room, and when the gentle wind blows lightly across its strings the effect produced is as if music was floating in the air, sweet notes swelling and diminishing according to the strength or weakness of the wind, requiring but little aid from one's imagination to transform the sounds into a spirit choir ?”

Harold.—“ Oh, Grandmamma, you are making this history quite lovely ; when I guessed Harp I never thought of half you have extracted from the answer.”

Grandmamma.—“ My dears, very glad I am to find you are all so pleased, but I should have been better satisfied if you had told me more, instead of allowing me to speak on, and throw in continually some light upon the Enigma ; were I to detail and touch upon even half the memories and the associations hanging round the Harp, I fear that we might all be found sitting in the ‘ Ebony Room ’ to-morrow morning, and that would never do for either old or young.”

With one voice all cried out, “ Oh, dear Granny, do explain some more of this beautiful history to us,” and Harold and Edgar chimed in,

“ If Gerald and Kathleen understand the Enigma fully, we do not ; so pray continue.”

Grandmamma could not resist this appeal, and she continued her explanation on condition that when any one of the party guessed any of the obscure part, he or

she ought to speak, and so save her some words. Grandmamma then went on to say, "Though the Harp is content to remain quiet yet it is never unwilling to be brought forward and *drawn out*; now this is a term used with the Harp and other stringed instruments, 'drawn out,' draw out the strings and surely it echoes well deep feelings. Kings and peasants alike excelled in playing it, and during the early ages of the Christian Church it was invariably used as the accompaniment for chanting and singing sacred music. Every monk's cell had its Harp or Lyre, to practise their parts for chanting, and it has been asserted on good authority that the Harp took its place in the choirs of Iona. So early as the sixth century we know the Harp was used as an accompaniment to 'the Caoinan' Keen, or dirge; on all occasions when this singular but ancient custom was observed in Ireland, the Harp figured conspicuously. In the Temple service the stringed instruments called Harp, Psaltery, or Lyre, were always used by the Prophets in the worship of God. Although used solely in early ages for sacred purposes, we read later of wandering harpers. Tommy Moore alludes to

'The minstrel boy to the war has gone,
With his wild harp slung behind him.'

In an old account of the Hall of Tara, referring to the manners and customs of the third century, it says 'a dignified place is always assigned to the Cruitire or Harpers.'

"In more modern times and amid gay assemblies the

lovers of dancing declare that the Harp's music marks time the best for Terpsichore's guests. Can none of you tell me what is the usual finish on the head of a harp?"

"A crown," said Mary.

Harold.—"Yes ; and I remember reading in an old book that when the bards and minstrels were praised for their performances they were fain to accord the honour to their harps, and crown them with flowers, myrtle, and laurel leaves."

Grandmamma.—"When words were useless and force vain, what did the Harp gain for Alfred the Great?"

"A kingdom," shouted the whole party, and Edgar continued in true school language—

"For disguising himself as a harper or minstrel, he entered the Danish camp, made his observations, returned to his friends, assembled his troops, and routed the enemy."

Edgar.—"I also recollect how Richard Cœur de Lion was discovered by Blondel, his faithful servant and instructor in music."

Kathleen.—"Oh, yes, that is such a favourite story ; poor Richard, returning from the Holy Land, in passing through Germany dressed as a pilgrim, was arrested by Leopold, Duke of Austria, and thrown into a dungeon, first being fettered ; and there unknown he would have died but for Blondel's harp."

Harold.—"Yes, indeed ; for Blondel having searched Palestine and several parts of Germany for his dear master, at last heard that a prisoner of rank was confined

in Lowenstein Castle, and hastening thither, he placed himself under the window of a grated tower, and played an air upon his harp which he knew the unhappy King loved, and which Blondel had composed for him."

Gerald.—"Imagine the joy Blondel must have felt on ending the first stanza, to hear from the depths of the dungeon a well-known voice take up the next!"

Harold.—"Some people think that Richard answered Blondel by playing on his harp inside, but any way he was discovered through the medium of the Harp; so we must keep close to the Enigma or we shall lose much that Grandmamma has still to tell us about the wonderful history of the Harp."

"And now," said Grandmamma, "though I have been listening with pleasure to your remarks, I wish some of you could tell me what old record it is that states the fact of an evil spirit—'one of those unseen powers of darkness'—being chased away by the tones of the Harp?"

Mary, whom we have already noticed as thoughtful, had been now so to some purpose, for in a quiet but decided voice, as if sure of being right and no chance guess, she said—"Was it not David, the Royal minstrel, who 'took his harp and played, and so the evil spirit departed from Saul?'"

Grandmamma.—"I am delighted, Mary, with the simple way you have answered me, giving scarcely a word of your own, but the grand impressive words of Scripture, describing the scene my Enigma alludes to of the evil spirit being conquered. A few words here ought

to finish the solving of my first Enigma, and I hope some of you will make as good and true a remark as Mary's."

Mr. Desmond.—"Why should we not exalt music and the harp above all the recreations of this life, when we remember the description given of our eternal home: where 'on harps of gold they praise His Name,' and 'the voices of harpers unite in one continued hymn of praise to Him who liveth for ever.'"

Gerald.—"We all thank you, dear Granny, for your most delightful history of 'the Harp,' and the great charm in it is owing to its being so unlike any other enigma or story that we ever heard before, so that it took us quite by surprise."

Norah.—"That must plead our excuse for seeming so dull and slow in finding out its full meaning."

Edgar.—"Then we must try to be very bright to-morrow evening about the second enigma."

Norah.—"I am not at all ready for a new one; I like to think well over 'the Harp' one, which is ever so much prettier since it has been explained."

"Ah, you little rogue," cried Edgar, "this praise is to coax Granny into explaining her enigmas, and thus saving your brains trouble."

Mary.—"It is quite true that the beauty and interest in the Enigma are increased many degrees since it has been solved; and usually, the pleasure ceases when the meaning comes out."

Edgar.—"But, Sister, don't you see that this Enigma of Granny's is different from every other."

"Each moment," said Kathleen, "something more

to be admired in it rises up, and there seems to be no end to beautiful ideas and old traditions connected with the Harp's history that make me long to hear Granny speak again."

Gerald.—"The subject seems so suggestive that I begin to think if Granny were to satisfy all our wishes and imaginations, morning would really dawn before she could finish."

Grandmamma.—"To prevent our pastime turning into a weariness and all of us being tired next day, I had better put as I promised a few finishing touches to my Enigma, and then wind it up while we are all 'wide awake,' for I should like you to take it fully in, so as to be able to explain every part of it at some future Christmas to others. In no history of the Harp that I have met has the fact been noticed when and where we first meet with mention of the Harp. So far I claim some originality in observing it, where I told you, in the Book of Genesis, numerous as are the traditions of its antiquity none date so far back. Some writers assert it came from the Syrians, from whom the Greeks borrowed it: others say it came from the north of Europe, and fancy they could trace its etymology in the languages of these nations; others maintain that the Harp derives its name from the Arpi, a people of Italy, who invented it. Gilileo thinks that the Italians received it from the Irish; one writer concludes his treatise on the Harp (a stringed instrument) by saying, 'whatever may have been its origin the invention is no doubt very ancient, being known to the Hebrews and

Egyptians.' The Irish school of Music (continued Grandmamma) is a sweet and perfect harmony, proper to a Harp of many strings, and with several kinds of time ; 'dirge time,' 'lamentation time,' 'heroic time,' and many other kinds. Clairsech is the Irish name for the common harp ; '*Cinnard Cruit' the high headed harp ; Crom Cruit, the down bending one ; but *Ceirnin was the small portable harp used by the priests and religious people. In the year 1805 a harp was found in a bog on your father's estate near this ; it was twelve feet below the surface, and was made of red willow, and had three brass strings in it when found. It was presented to the Society for Collecting Irish Antiquities in Dublin, and these facts prove how illustrious an instrument the Irish Harp has been in bygone days. Of course you all know that the Harp figures conspicuously in the Arms of Ireland."

"O yes," was echoed round the party.

"We do love to hear all these dear old stories," said Edgar, "and Granny tells them as no one else could, and this Ebony Room is so snug this cold snowy evening."

Grandmamma.—"The longest day must end, and it is quite time for this one to rest ; I have not much more to add, but I would like to say a little about the Harp preserved in the museum of Trinity College, Dublin, and known as the Harp of Brian Boru, the celebrated Irish monarch whom I have often told you about. This harp is not only the most ancient instrument of the kind existing in Ireland, but it is probably

* C pronounced K.

the oldest harp remaining in Europe. Of course numerous traditions exist respecting this harp, but one of the most interesting facts in its history is, that the person who last awoke its long silent harmonies was a minstrel descended from the same royal race to whom it originally owed its celebrity. That this harp did not belong to the class of bardic instruments, but rather to that smaller class used by the Irish ecclesiastics as accompaniments to their voices in singing hymns, would seem more probable from its very small size, which would unfit it for being used by the minstrels at the festive board ; and this conclusion seems correct from the sacred monogram I.H.S. being carved in relieve in the Gothic character on it. But whether it was really Brian Borohme or Boru's harp, and took its famed journey to Rome, and passed through the many hands and scenes reported, which are too numerous for me to detail now, there is no doubt of its being a most interesting and valuable specimen of 'the ancient Irish Harp' and a truly national monument of antiquity. That harps of this description were in common use among the Irish ecclesiastics from the very first introduction of Christianity into this country, is apparent from the lives of the most distinguished Irish Saints, as also from the testimony of Cambrensis in the twelfth century. Harps of this kind were represented on the knees of ecclesiastics upon several of our ancient stone crosses of the eight, ninth, and tenth centuries, and likewise appear on some of our oldest shrines.

Mr. Desmond.—"I think I could repeat those pretty lines written by Tommy Moore on the supposed origin of the harp; they are full of beauty, though I feel sure you will all laugh at the origin assigned by the poets to harps :

'Tis believed that this harp which I wake now for thee
Was a siren of old who sung under the sea ;
And who often at eve thro' the bright billow rov'd,
To meet on the green shore a youth whom she lov'd.
But she lov'd him in vain for he left her to weep,
And in tears all the night her gold ringlets to steep.
Till heav'n look'd with pity on true-love so warm,
And chang'd to the soft harp the sea-maiden's form !
Still her bosom rose fair, still her cheek smiled the same,
While her sea beauties gracefully curl'd round the frame,
And her hair shedding tear-drops from all its bright rings,
Fell o'er her white arm to make the gold strings.
Hence it came that this soft harp so long hath been known
To mingle love's language with sorrow's sad tone
Till thou didst divide them and teach the fond lay
To be love when I'm near thee, and grief when away."


"A poetical but very different origin from the one I have told you," said Grandmamma, when her son ceased to speak, "but I asked everyone freely to give his or her opinion."

Gerald.—"We have often heard of a subject being talked on and drawn out until it became bare, but it appears to me as if this harp topic, like a precious mine, grows richer the deeper we get into it."

Grandmamma.—"It really is time for us all to rest, and say—

Dear harp of my country, farewell. . . . Go
Sleep with the sunshine of fame on thy slumbers,
Till touched by some hand less unworthy than mine.
I was but as the wind passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I wak'd was thy own."

SECOND EVENING.

HE same party we have described gathered round the bright wood fire in the Ebony Room at a much earlier hour on the second meeting than the first ; the day had been too severe to admit of the young people finding recreation out-of-doors, the heavy fall of snow being frozen over. Every one therefore was ready and but too willing to ask Aunt Eva to unclasp the little manuscript book and read Grandmamma's

ENIGMA II.

“Although very ancient I am unable to boast of antediluvian fame, as the first mention of my existence occurs about the ninth century after the Deluge. Scarcely raised then from the ground, I have since attained a great height. I was first used in a sacred office on the most solemn occasions. To judge by my names I belong to the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders. My shape has universally been considered graceful. My hues various and uncertain as my size and weight ; possessed of an ear, yet I have never

heard, and with a tongue that was never known to utter a word, have not been mistaken in meaning ; for of the many voices we read of being in the world, and 'none of them without signification,' I am undoubtedly one of the earth's truest voices and constant agents, following closely on the steps of time, unity, and order. I have reminded of bondage and an usurper, of labour's task and rest from it, of refreshment and peace, of heathen rites and their sacrifices, and yet I have been for many ages the constant companion of devotion in Christian lands. I am full of sorrow, misery, remorse, fear, betrayed in the various tones of my voice. The boldest have quailed on hearing me ; the most happy have asked for me and expected me ; the mighty deep has owned me, and my powerful voice has been known even to conquer its fury when no human being was nigh to me. I have at such times clasped the waves and rose above them again quite unharmed. At other times I have plunged into the depths of the ocean, when without using tongue or voice, but depending solely on my ear, have protected human life. In sunny, thoughtful, rustic scenes I have added another note to nature's many, and in Alpine glaciers, when the canopy of night but darkened those terrors, I have cheered the fainting heart, and guided the wayworn pilgrim ; a mighty king gave up the siege of a strong city through fear of me ; I have been invoked during convulsions of nature. Considered and classed amongst antiques, yet I am in daily, hourly, modern use, and without using my voice or

being able to speak, I can give an historical account of myself to every one, and accurately tell the date of my birth, no matter how old. As I end with time, and cannot hope for posthumous fame, I therefore carry my inscription with me. So here ends my short history, as it would be impossible to enumerate the thousand memories and associations connected with me without giving my readers far too clear a lamp to see what I am."

Aunt Eva's voice had scarcely ceased reading when Gerald said, "I have guessed this enigma."

"Oh, don't say it aloud yet," cried several voices, "or you will spoil our long evening."

Edgar.—"To guess it the moment Aunt Eva stopped reading is too provoking." "And," said Harold, "now we shall lose all Granny's nice explanations, like the beautiful history of the Harp."

"Well," continued Gerald, "I may be wrong, though I think I am right. However, I need not say the word, and all of you can continue guessing and giving your ideas."

Mary.—"The guessing circle I fear will soon be narrower, for provoking as you will call me also, I think I have guessed the right thing, but suppose I dare not say the word at present."

Kathleen.—"This poor thing is pretty ancient too, though not so old as the Harp, and ends with time, has an ear, a tongue, a voice; is graceful, of various hues and sizes, and without speaking or using its voice can give an account of itself and the date of its birth. Well, I for one am puzzled."

"Then I am not," cried Harold. "I had half an idea as to what it was before you began to speak, but now I feel certain of having guessed Granny's second enigma as well as her first one."

Grandmamma.—"It would seem that out of our small party, three are sure of having guessed the right answer, and to judge by the expression of Norah's and Edgar's faces, they appear to have some idea of it also ; so there is no use in mystifying the name of the thing any longer. Therefore, Gerald, as you were the first who guessed it, pray say it aloud."

"Bell," answered Gerald.

"Yes," continued Grandmamma, "Bell is the right answer, but quickly guessed as it has been by many of you, I venture to say it has really been read by none of the circle ; and I shall have such a wonderful history to give of it, that you need not look so vexed at its being solved so early in the evening, for you would all be wearied, were I to detail everything I could say on the subject, as the answer itself will require more information to explain it than the Harp Enigma. When and where are bells first named ?"

Not one of the party could answer the question, having no clearer idea as to when, than from the enigma dating its existence from the ninth century after the Deluge.

"But where ?" continued Grandmamma, "where ; and how used ?"

Not one of the party attempted a reply. Therefore Grandmamma went on to say : "The traditional ac-

count of the use of Bells is so ancient as to be lost in the shade of remote antiquity. Setting aside that bell which an Eastern writer asserts was manufactured by Tubal Cain and used by Noah to summon his ship carpenters to their daily work, we must content ourselves with the earliest authentic mention of Bells which is to be found in the 28th chapter of the Book of Exodus, 33 and 34th verses, where we read that the High Priest was commanded to wear golden bells, alternating with golden pomegranates on the hem of the blue vestment in which he was robed, during the performance of religious ceremonies. The bells ringing when the High Priest walked, told the people when he entered the 'Holy of Holies.' This first certain account of bells tells of them as scarcely raised from the ground, but you all know the great height some of them are placed in belfrys, towers, etc. But the bell was first used in a sacred office and on a most solemn occasion. To judge by the names given to bells am I not justified in saying they belong to the three genders. We read of Susannah at Erfurt ; Saints Anne and Mary at St. Petersburg ; Peter of York ; Tom of Christ Church, Oxford and Lincoln ; Big Ben of Westminster, and many bells without a name. The custom of baptizing bells still exists in some Roman Catholic countries, although at one period forbidden in consequence of the confusion and trouble frequently caused by the people assembling during thunderstorms or any convulsions of nature and calling upon the Saints to whom the bells were called after and dedicated to, to come

and deliver them from whatever danger was impending at the time."

Harold.—"Bell-shaped flowers, or indeed most things of this form, are called graceful ; and as we read of silver bells, golden bells, and metal of all kinds cast into them, Granny is correct in saying 'its hues are as various as its size and weight.' I am afraid to venture to tell the weight of one great bell I read a description about."

Edgar.—"Do name the weight of your wonderful bell?"

"The great Bell at Moscow is the one I mean," said Harold ; "cast in the year 1653, in the reign of the Empress Anne. It is said to weigh 443,772 pounds."

Norah.—"I can scarcely imagine such a bell, and thought Big Ben of Westminster the most wonderful one in the world, when I listened to its deep voice."

Kathleen.—"A bell has three parts—a body, an ear (or cannon), and a tongue (or clapper). This description I met in an old book of antiquities, and no doubt, though its tongue never was known to utter a word, yet a bell's tone cannot be mistaken as to its meaning, thus proving one of earth's truest voices for either sorrow or joy."

Harold.—"Yes, and it is found in all civilized countries now ; in cities and villages, palaces and prisons, churches and dwelling-houses."

"And," added Gerald, "in every ship that cuts the ocean wave, varying in stature, speech, and voice ; some high, with giant voices, others little puny things, with tinkling voices ; some minister in religious cere-

monies, proclaim the march of time ; at marriages act joyfully ; at funerals mournfully : but doleful as is the sound to us of the death-bell, yet it is the joyful signal of everlasting joy to many a spirit."

Mary.—"I do not like interrupting dear Granny when about to tell us some part of this history, but she begged of us to speak out when an idea struck us, and I read somewhere that the 'Passing Bell' was rung when persons lay dying to chase away any evil spirits hovering near the bed of the patient waiting to take captive the liberated soul, and ready to engage in a contest with the good guardian angels."

Harold.—"But I also read that the 'Passing Bell' was retained after the Reformation, and tolled to excite the living to pray for the soul about to depart."

Grandmamma.—"No one can mistake the toll sepulchral, so let the 'Passing Bell' ever remind us of the shortness of time and of the need of that Saviour, to hear the good tidings of whose grace the Church bell has so often served as a merciful invitation to us all. An Evening Bell, the Curfew, or *couvre feu* is famous alike in the story of our social life and literature."

"Oh yes, Granny," cried little Edgar, "I can tell something of this bell, introduced by William the Conqueror to guard against fire.

Cover the embers and put out the light.
Toil comes with morning,
And rest with night."

Mr. Desmond.—"I think we are getting something brighter now, although 'the Curfew does toll the knell of parting day.'"

"I am delighted to find," said Grandmamma, "the answer has proved as much of an enigma as 'the Bell,' and so taken off the disappointed look all faces betrayed when 'Bell' sounded in their ears on Gerald's naming it. Grateful to the young is the sound of bells, and 'many a tale their music tells,' to the old, reviving the memory of bye-gone days, of joyous and mournful incidents in the journey of life. Home—happiness—early recollections—friends—family—all are in the voice of bells."

Mr. Desmond.—"The festivals of the heathen were ushered in by bells; the Feast of Osiris was dedicated to bells; and in Athens the 'Priests of Cybele' made use of them at their sacrifices. The Romans hung bells on their doors; their night watch carried each a bell to give the alarm in case of accident or danger. Bells were also hung on the necks of criminals on their way to execution, that persons might be warned from their path, as it was deemed a bad omen to meet those sacrifices devoted to the 'Dii Manes.' Bells were suspended to the necks of animals. The Prophet Zechariah says, 'In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.'"

Gerald.—"I have lately been translating Schiller's hymn of 'The Bell,' (Die Glöcke,) which ought to make me well up in everything about it from the casting and completing to its many uses, at the birth, progress, duties, and death of mankind. Pleasant and venerable are some of the associations connected with

bells, these unconscious assistants of our deeds, and ministering servants of our religion, at our births and marriages, theirs are the merriest voices. At man's death, alas! they too often are his only mourners. Bells give alarm—herald in triumphs—peal softly and holily over meadow and valley, calling to prayer in the old gray church.

Mary—"Oh, Gerald, you are giving us some of your translation, word for word; but the quotation is so true to the part of the Enigma we are discussing, that we must all approve. How true it is that no other manufacture in general use, is hallowed by memories so various as the Bell; no other tongue tells a story so touchingly to the ear of universal humanity. Sweeter, gentler, holier perhaps, than all bells, are those of the Vespers in the ear of the peasant returning from his toil; in the ear of the traveller weary of his long day; in the ear of the fisherman pausing as he rests upon his oars in the quiet bay, the sound echoes along the shore thoughtfully and melancholy, like a voice of the dim past."

Grandmamma.—"Amongst all the knowledge that is coming out in turn from each of our guessing party, there is one portion of the Enigma we are likely to stop at now for some time; 'where the Bell has been known to conquer the mighty deep in its greatest fury, when no human being was nigh.'"

Mary.—"Obscure as Granny thinks this part of the Enigma likely to prove to us, I can answer it, for this morning I was reading Mrs. Hemans's 'Bell at Sea,'

a poem written on the fact Granny alludes to. This statement is put in a note at end of the verses: 'The Bell Rock off the coast of Fifeshire, twelve miles distant from the mainland; close to the rock was a great gulf that swallowed up every ship that was blown near it, until the old monks from a neighbouring monastery cast a bell, and with many prayers, and much risk of their lives, contrived to place this bell on the rock, so arranged that when the waves covered it they pressed a spring sufficiently to cause the bell to rise high and ring loudly, as each wave swept over it; this warned vessels from the horrors near (unseen when the rock was covered with water). A wicked pirate cut down "The Bell at Sea," and some years after was himself wrecked on the very spot; since which event the light-house, known as the "Bell Rock Light-house," has been erected there.'

Harold.— "This is a wonderful story Mary has told us; we must read the poem to-morrow. Diving-bell will suit the next few lines, where it plunges into the ocean, and, without using tongue or voice, but depending solely on its ear, protects human life."

Edgar.—"How clever of Granny to say 'depending on my ear,' which alludes to the chain passing through the ear (of bell) that supports the diving-bell."

Harold.—"It would keep us up too late to describe all the wonders of a diving-bell—what a great invention it was, and what a brave fellow he must have been who first ventured down in one."

Kathleen.—"Sheep-bells must be meant when it

says 'in rustic scenes I add another note to nature's many;' and the great St. Bernard dogs, sent out in the snow at night with bells round their necks to find travellers, accounts for its cheering fainting hearts, and guiding wayworn pilgrims."

Edgar.—"How pretty the Enigma is growing now that we are getting amongst joy bells."

Grandmamma.—"Can any of the party tell who was the mighty king that fled with his army, all panic-struck through fear of bells?"

Not one of the circle in the "Ebony Room" could answer Grandmamma, which gave her at last an opportunity of throwing in some light, as she called it.

Grandmamma.—"It was in the year 610 that Clothaire the Second of France gave up the siege of Sens, his army being terrified by the ringing of bells belonging to the church of Saint Stephen there, which Lupez, Bishop of Orleans, ordered to be rung, when the soldiers fled, panic-struck."

Gerald.—"I suppose they never heard a bell before, as it was not until the end of the seventh century that bells were universally used in Christian churches, although, in some instances, they were before that applied to the purposes of religious worship; for Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, a city of Campania in Italy, first adapted them to his church in the year 400. Hence the word *campanile* (belfry), still used in Italian."

Grandmamma.—"It is asserted that bells were used for churches by the Greek Christians up to the

period when Constantinople was taken by the Turks, who prohibited their being rung, lest their clamour should disturb the repose of souls, which, according to their belief, wander through the realms of air; but after this, in places remote from the ears of the new rulers, bells were used for religious purposes, and there were some very ancient bells on Mount Athos. Pope Sebastian, who died in 605, first ordered that the hours of the day should be announced by striking the bell, that people might better attend to the 'Horæ Canonicæ' (hours for singing and praying)."

Gerald.—"Not only to drive away evil spirits, but to counteract the natural influences of storms and pestilence, did it become customary to ring the bells of churches in order to purify the air. At this day, even, the belief exists in Switzerland that the undulation of air caused by the sound of a bell breaks the electric fluid of a thunder cloud; but I believe the custom of ringing bells at the approach of thunder is of great antiquity, not so much from the idea of shaking the air, and so dissipating the thunder, as to call people to pray for preservation from the scourge."

Mr. Desmond.—"Be these opinions as they may, they scarcely balance the written evidence of legendary lore, and the graven and extraordinary inscriptions upon some old bells, the still lingering superstitions of many lands about them, and the graceful perpetuations of them in the pages of our poets."

Grandmamma.—"So recently as the year 1852 the Bishop of Malta gave orders for all the church bells

on the island to be rung for the purpose of calming a violent gale ; but I fear we are getting too learned in our history of the bell, as no remark has been made lately by any of the young party, leaving the elders to state these wonderful facts ; and I am puzzled about the manner of winding up this Enigma, as in speaking of the supposed influence of bells on any convulsion of nature, brings us to the subject of inscriptions on them, always in Latin ; but I shall only mention a few, and give the translation in English."

Harold.—"I know that all bells have the date of their birth, as the enigma tells us, and are, therefore, able to make it known, no matter how old ; but I had no idea about these odd inscriptions, and we must trust to Granny's translating some."

Grandmamma.—"Were I to enter fully into this part of the bell's history, pages would not finish the strange inscriptions antiquarians have brought to light. Here is one in which there is nothing to laugh at, but contains truth :—

'I mourn at funerals; I break the lightning; I proclaim the Sabbath; I urge the tardy; I disperse the winds; I calm the turbulent.'

On one of the three bells placed by Edward the Third in the Little Sanctuary, Westminster, are the words—

'King Edward made me thirty thousand weight and three,
Take me down and weigh me, and more you shall find me.'

On the famous alarm bell in belfry tower, in the City of Ghent, is the following, in Flemish dialect :—

‘My name is Roland; when I toll there is fire,
And when I ring loud there is victory in the land.’

Mr. Desmond.—“I think we have had enough of these old dates and inscriptions, so far as the young heads are concerned; so I will give you a history of the bells of Limerick Cathedral, and if any of you should chance to hear their lovely voice, you will think of poor Orlando the bell-maker, from Italy. After the toil of many years Orlando finished his bells, and they were purchased by the prior of a neighbouring convent; with the profits of this sale the young Italian procured a little villa, where he had the pleasure of hearing his bells daily from the convent tower, calling him and his family to prayer. This happiness was not to continue. In some of those civil broils which are the undying worm to the peace of a fallen land, the good Orlando was a sufferer. He lost his all, and after the passing of the storm, found himself alone preserved, amid the wreck of fortune, friends, family, and home. The convent in which his bells were hung was razed to the earth, and his skilful work, ‘The Bells,’ carried to another land. Unfortunate Orlando, haunted by his memories, and deserted by his hopes, became a wanderer over Europe. His hair grew grey, and his heart withered. In this desolation of spirit he determined on seeking the country where it was reported his treasures had been carried. He sailed for Ireland, and proceeded towards the Shannon; the vessel anchored soon after they entered the river, when he hired a small boat to bring him on to land in

Limerick. The city rose before him, and he beheld Saint Mary's Cathedral lifting its turreted head above the smoke and mist of the old town. Orlando sat in the stern, looking fondly towards it. It was an evening so calm and beautiful as to remind him of his own native haven; the broad river appeared like one smooth mirror as the boat glided over it with noiseless expedition. On a sudden, amid the general stillness, 'The Bells' tolled from the cathedral; the rowers rested on their oars. The old Italian looked towards the ringing towers, crossed his arms on his breast, and lay back in his seat.

'Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells
Of youth and home, and that sweet time
When last I heard their soothing chime.'

All came in the sound, and went with it to his heart. When the rowers looked at him they beheld his face still turned towards the cathedral, but his eyes were closed to all earthly sights, and his bells toll for the dead. Great as a king he went unto his long repose."

Mary.—"At the risk of keeping you all up another half-hour, I cannot resist reading some lines written on the very tradition we have just heard. I should like much to read the entire poem, but it would be too long for this evening, as it enters into every detail respecting Orlando's country, early days, occupation, home, wife, family:—

'His soul was formed for music, by whose spells
He wrought his bodied joys in tuneful bells.

As from the convent cliff soft music swells,
 The mingling music of his own loved bells.
 Aurora's dawn awoke their silvery sounds,
 At eve's decline they rang their merry rounds;
 And woke sweet serenades when labour done,
 Around his flowery home at setting sun.

* * * *

But Orland's bells were saved by Leo's smile,
 And sent, a trophy, to some unknown isle.'"

Kathleen.—"How beautiful that part of the poem is where it describes poor Orlando as left alone, having survived all he held dear in this world; and hearing that his loved bells lived in some distant land, he set out to wander through Europe's varying climes—

'Hoping to hear once more his darling chimes.
 Halted by each convent gray at vesper hour,
 To catch each mingling peal of church and tower.'

But all in vain, till a beam of hope arose. The

'Bells' fame had borne the joyful news one day,
 That safe in Erin's south his treasures lay.'

He flew the Atlantic wastes, till—

'The Emerald Isle soon shone 'mid glittering waves,
 First star of beauty purpled ocean laves.

* * * *

He reached the noble Shannon's silvery tide,
 Mingling with Tarbert's sea in foaming pride.

* * * *

Soon Limerick's ancient walls in beauty shone,
 Crowned with the noble castle of King John.
 The old cathedral tower, Saint Mary's own,
 Rose in its princely pride above the town;
 Once Brian Boru's palace, still declares
 The glorious memories of immortal wars.
 The whole a citadel of Erin's right,
 Unconquered by King William's stubborn might.
 Hark, Hark! sweet bells. * * *

Now whispering fairy voices on the ear,
 Then pealing tuneful thunder wild and clear.
 The rowers rest on oars—Orlando starts. * * *
 "Ave Maria! list—my own loved bells,
 Each thrilling sound—of home, love, family, tells;
 Of early joys, of brightest hopes, all fled;
 Of all the comforts of a long life dead.
 My toil is well repaid, I drink again
 The heavenly raptures of my own loved strain:
 Signora—Gesù!" sweetly rose in air,
 Orlando's arms lay crossed in voiceless prayer.
 He sank as gently 'neath the evening sky,
 As shuts some lovely flower her starry eye;
 And sinking with the sun in seeming death,
 Sheds on the zephyr's wings her odorous breath.
 The rowers turned to catch the words he said,
 They found his corse alone—his soul had fled.
 His own sweet bells had burst the bonds of life,
 And bore his spirit far from care and strife.
 Forth on those heavenly sounds of music rung,
 To join her kindred skies his spirit sprung.
 But still his tale the ancient minstrel tells—
 He lives immortal in sweet Limerick Bells.' "

Grandmamma.—"Thank you, thank you all, my dear children, for the many bright ideas given this evening by nearly all of you in turn; for I consider the next best thing to a good original thought is an appropriate quotation, of which we have just had the best specimen in Mary's and Kathleen's well-brought-in lines from the poem on the Limerick Bells, which is quite new to me, and makes me long to read the entire; but this can't be to-night. Who is the author of the poem?"

Kathleen.—" 'Anonymous,' is the modest word at the end, but we have rendered them due honour to-night, according to Dr. Johnson's definition."

Mary.—"I know what you allude to—the question

he put to Hannah More. 'What is the highest compliment we can pay an author?' 'To quote him,' she replied. 'Right, my child,' said her rough friend."

Grandmamma.—"I consider Mary and Kathleen have put the finishing touches to my second Enigma, leaving me but little to add. There is something beautiful in Church bells. Hopefully they speak to high and low, rich and poor, in the same voice; there is a tone in them that ought to scare pride and envy from every heart; a sound that should cause man to look upon the world with kind forgiving eyes, that should make the earth itself seem at least for a time a holy place. Yes, there is a long sermon in the very sound of Church bells if we only have the ears rightly to understand it: there is a preacher in every belfry, who with his iron tongue has the voice of an angel imploring the children of earth to come and learn what is laid up for them, and begging of all poor weary, struggling, fighting, human creatures to take rest—be quiet and forget their follies, heart-burnings, and week-day craft, and learn to be humble amid the pride and hardness of the world. 'Come,' cries the bell, 'and learn how to take heart, and walk through the wickedness and cruelties of the world calmly as holy Daniel walked among the roaring lions—unhurt.

'Oft as the bell with solemn toll
Speaks the departure of a soul
Let each one ask himself, "Am I
Prepared should I be called to die?"
Then when the solemn bell I hear,
If saved from guilt I need not fear;

Nor would the thought distressing be
 Perhaps it next may toll for me.
 Rather my spirit would rejoice
 And long and wish for Jesu's voice !
 Glad when it bids me earth resign
 Secure of heaven if He be mine.' "

Mr. Desmond.—Who has not listened to the Christmas bells, so soft and clear, telling glad tidings to high and low, and then watched for the peal of the departing year, when the step of time moves to that familiar chime.

' Fair fall the tones that steep
 The old year in the dews of sleep,
 The new guide softly in
 With hopes to sweet sad memories kin.
 Long may that soothing cadence, ear, heart,
 conscience win.' "

Grandmamma.—

" ' The bell that with its peaceful sound
 Rings through the morning air
 While half the world is slumbering round ;
 Whom doth it call to prayer ?'

Not those certainly who nightly sit up as late as the circle in the ' Ebony Room ' are doing to-night." And without adding another word Grandmamma Desmond got up and with steady purpose rang

THE PRAYER BELL.

THE THIRD EVENING.

IT will be quite impossible to forget the Bell Enigma," said Edgar, as he bounded into the Ebony Room where all the party were waiting for his arrival to read the third. Granny's silver bell had summoned him from the Library where he was trying to write down some of the wonderful history of bells.

Mary.—"Neither can we forget the Harp one, as the first object that must strike anyone's eye on coming into the Ebony Room is Granny's little Irish harp with its crown of silver and oak shamrocks."

Gerald.—"I wonder if we shall find the Enigma Aunt Eva is waiting to read as difficult to guess and as easy to remember."

Aunt Eva.—"Allow me to put your skill and knowledge into exercise and judge for yourselves, here is Granny's

ENIGMA III.

"I am, as is generally the case with all who like me have grown to a great height, extremely thin and delicate, shapeless and devoid of colour. The lords of

creation have sometimes vainly attempted to get above me, and in such efforts have gained much pain, without either pleasure or profit ; my natural state is healthy, but I am peculiarly liable to disease, I am a great contagionist, but a steady auxiliary notwithstanding to all medical men ; my noise may at times be said to rival an earthquake ; I can be extreme in cold and heat, and also between extremes, and, like all things in this world, both bad and good in large proportions can be found in me : I am the most wonderful laboratory in life. Music would never have existed without me. Activity is necessary for my health and life, and elasticity is one of my chief peculiarities : three distinct kinds belong to me, each with totally opposite properties containing amongst other things life and death : I have been known to cause a quicker death than any other ingredient, and yet have been the apparent means of prolonging life beyond its usual period. I have many notes in my wild voice. At midnight my chorus is full and loudest, and my power terrible though viewless. I am a great despot, my roar or howl strikes terror on sea or land, sometimes my breathing sounds like a whistle. I can be calm and gentle, with very exciting powers to some and an oppressive weight to others. I am anything but steady, and therefore it is difficult to try to give an explanation of my compound nature, as the description of one hour or place would not accord with the very next. Still fickle, as in truth I am, I am not sufficiently so to numbers who change me still oftener

than I might do myself. I am, alas, exceedingly deceptive, although so transparent that any eye capable of vision could read through me immediately. I belong to all countries and climes, be they gloomy or sunny ; I am the unseen tenant of immensity ; I am the chief support of all that adds pleasure and life to everyone and thing around me, which shows that with all my lightness I have some power of control, but I am myself in perpetual motion—pages might be filled with various descriptions of my velocity, etc., but I can now only add that neither the reader nor the writer could exist without what I am darkening by words."

When Aunt Eva ceased reading there was a long silence ; not one of the party seemed to have the remotest idea of the nature of this shapeless, thin, delicate, colourless, high thing.

Grandmamma.—"Have none of you an idea respecting any part of this new subject?"

Gerald.—"I have ; when Aunt Eva read the part 'Three distinct kinds belong to me, each with totally different properties, containing amongst other things life and death,' I did think of ——"

"Don't say it, Gerald," cried several voices.

"Well, my dears," said Grandmamma, "I think we shall continue a silent party if Gerald does not name the thing, for I feel he has guessed it by fixing on that part he has just repeated, but if anyone else in the circle is getting bright Gerald will have no objection to his, or her, saying the thoughts aloud."

Silence again pervaded the whole party, so Grand-mamma without longer delay desired Gerald to use his key to unlock the Enigma, when they would all soon see its contents and be able to use their tongues and information for mutual benefit and pleasure, as on previous evenings.

Gerald.—"As I have got Granny's permission, and by silence your consent, I name what you stopped me saying a few minutes since—'Air.'"

Edgar.—"Now it seems plainer than either of the two first."

Harold.—"How could we have been so stupid, and there are so many parts of the Enigma that almost tell it out! air being thin, delicate, colourless, transparent, invisible, elastic, and surrounding our earth to the height of several miles."

"Yes," continued Kathleen, "and when the lords of creation, as you men call yourselves, have attempted to get above the air or atmosphere in balloons or on the top of a high mountain they have been scarcely able to breathe from the thinness of the air, causing them pain, without gaining anything worth such a risk."

Harold.—"How well Granny brings in, 'My natural state is heathy,' but diseases of all kinds are, we know, transmitted through the medium of the air, which accounts for its being, as she calls it, a 'contagionist and yet steady assistant to all medical men,' who, when they can do nothing more for a patient, recommend change of air, at home or abroad."

Gerald.—"The next part is easily read, 'My noise

may be said to rival an earthquake,' for the explosion of compressed air conveys a sound like that caused by gunpowder, or blasting rocks through its medium, I ought to say."

Mary.—"Here comes a part that does not require much explanation—'I can be extreme in both heat and cold, and also between extremes, and, like everything in this life, both bad and good in large quantities can be found in me.'"

"And surely," added Gerald, "this ocean of air we are discussing is truly the great laboratory in which most of the actions of life go on, and on the composition of which they depend, though invisible, without smell or taste, yet it is a substance possessing all the principal attributes of matter, and the part Mary says requires but little explanation we might write a treatise on."

Mr. Desmond.—"It is quite true, but I fear if we were to begin explaining the numerous experiments tried with, and in, air, we should never arrive at the general reading of this Enigma in one evening."

Gerald.—"Yes, the subject is too deep, aerial as it is, and requiring more scientific knowledge than might be suitable for recreation hours of some of the party, were we to tell of the many discoveries, uses, and chemical properties of air, and how, when it is brought in contact with animal and vegetable substances it changes them immediately, particularly if it be moist, and gives to some of them acid properties."

Edgar.—"I know it bleaches flax, hemp, linen, silk,

and increases the brilliancy of many colours. Old Norah, the boatman's wife, told me all about it, and showed us all the nice linen she bleached on this island for Granny, and told us about flax, and how she used to spin it."

Kathleen.—"No doubt air is the principal medium of sound, which answers the part about music; without air we should neither have smell, light, nor sense of hearing."

"What is wind?" asked Grandmamma.

"Air in motion," replied Kathleen.

"A first-rate answer," said Gerald.

Mary.—"Wind gives us many new ideas; until this moment I never thought of its being air in motion, and necessary to the healthy state of air."

"Yes," said Grandmamma, "it is a wise dispensation of Providence that certain portions of the atmosphere are passed with velocity from one place to another; for if the air were not purified by frequent winds in the same manner as the waters of the sea are by the tides, it would be unfit for respiration, and both would become unfriendly to life."

"It is not so very long ago," said Edgar, "since I believed wind was caused by trees in some mysterious way, and that any place without them could have no wind."

Norah.—"Well, Edgar, I did not think you were ever so foolish. Think of the storms at sea—sails rent by it, and gales blowing that no ship could live in, often battling against wind and tide."

Mr. Desmond.—"Young heads do not come all at once to understand the wonders of air and earth, fire and water. It was finding the great levity or elasticity of inflammable air (hydrogen gas) that led to the idea of inventing a machine which would enable us to rise into the air by means of the balloon; but in spite of the many experiments, improvements, and attempts at aerial excursions, with their too often fatal termination, but little advance has been made in the way of guiding them."

Gerald.—"So long as balloons are at the mercy of the wind—

'No power can brave him, no fetters can bind,
Supreme in his sway rules the King of the Wind.
He careers o'er the waters with death and despair,
He wrecks the proud ship, and his triumph is there.
The cheeks that had blanch'd not at foeman or blade,
At the sound of his breathing turn'd pale and afraid.
He rocks the strong lighthouse, he shivers the mast;
He howls, the staunch lifeboat in fragments is cast.
And he roars in his glory—where, where will ye find
A despot so great as the King of the Wind?'"

Mr. Desmond.—"Gerald's poetical allusion to the power of the wind leads me to remark that balloons are not now so completely at the mercy of air in motion as during the first years of vessel air-sailing; and if geology, astronomy, steam power, electricity, and nautical science can't boast of having made one bound towards perfection, why should ballooning? We have but lately succeeded in making ships go against the wind, and why should we despair of mastering an aerial vessel? Although the idea of invent-

ing a machine to enable us to rise into the air appears to have engaged the human mind in ancient times, it was never realised until the last century."

"Not more than eighty years ago," said Gerald, "since the first balloon travelled the air, and if we could now inspect a specimen of a boat constructed eighty years after men began to venture on the water, depend upon it we would sooner cross the Atlantic in the 'Great Eastern,' than venture across the narrow ferry from this island to the mainland in the primitive pigmy of our forefathers."

Mr. Desmond.—"And I am convinced that ballooning, as an art, is steadily advancing, although the uninitiated may not see much progress; and though I can't assert that the balloon ever strikingly deviates from the point the wind blows from, yet its various belongings are gradually improving, and, as the application of steam required a reconstruction of our war vessels, so will some new power demand a similar alteration for vessels in the air, and the difficulties which seemed insurmountable at the beginning of the nineteenth century, may soon be dispelled, and the great high road to all the nations of the earth (the atmosphere) can be sailed through triumphantly."

Gerald.—"However interesting some information on balloons would prove to myself, it is not fair towards the rest of the assembled party for recreation to be compelled to dwell too long on one portion of the Enigma, as even a brief account of experiments and inventions might involve, without our touching

on the sad fate of the aeronauts who first ventured to tempt the void of air 'with wings not to mortals given;' but I intend to write a treatise on this full and wonderful subject, truly a thing of air and in air, and will collect the many names of aeronauts in sundry ages and climes, giving their melancholy stories and ingenious discoveries about air (hydrogen gas), as likewise the various machines invented to manage it, and guide to the upper regions, such as wings, oars, parachute, sails; and, beginning with the noted 'Pilatre de Rosier,' will not omit to notice a host of other adventurers in the regions of air."

Mr. Desmond.—"Before we proceed a step more into air, perhaps you all might like to hear that I witnessed the ascent of a balloon a few years ago from Limerick, and must say did not experience the regret when the balloon was freed, and began to rise, which has been said all spectators feel on seeing aeronauts start without those on 'terra firma:.' it was quite the reverse with me, feeling rejoiced that I was not in the car, and experienced a sorrowful sensation on seeing the gentleman aeronaut fixing himself amid furs in it, he having first shaken hands with his numerous friends and many of the spectators also, who cheered loudly, and, in true keeping with such an expedition, discharged an 'air gun.' The moment the ropes were cut, and the balloon mounted with a steady, even, majestic pace, wonder mingled with anxiety was depicted in every face; but when, from their lofty station in the air, the aeronauts calmly waved their hats and

saluted the crowd beneath, a general shout of exclamation burst forth from all sides, but was instantly hushed, and the crowd turned into a listening one, for a joyous peal from S. Mary's, of Orlando's bells announced the aerial voyagers were then passing over the cathedral tower, and all eyes were fixed on the balloon, as it then and there crossed the Shannon and suddenly rose to a great height, until it became a speck, and was soon no longer discernible to the naked eye. On, on it sailed in its wild career until daylight had gone and moonlight began, and the aeronauts, fearing the wide Atlantic was too near for safety, determined on letting themselves down on land; but the wind was strong, some of the silk had rent, and though they checked the rapidity of their motion by letting out much gas, yet the balloon was precipitated with such force in a wood six miles distant from where they had ascended twelve hours previously, that the gentleman's arm was broken in the fall. If from the fact of ascending he had proved himself a hero of adventure, he was now transformed into one of interest and romance; and during the few succeeding weeks that he was unable to follow his usual occupation (pen work), he held a regular levee daily, friends coming to hear his impressions of the upper regions. He described his sensations as very mixed, a combination of pain and pleasure, fear and admiration; the light fleecy clouds looking lovely, sometimes as if an archipelago of snowy islets all floating in a dark blue sea, some sailing away and

forming into various shapes, looking like castles, mountains, towers, and sundry other things of earth, not air. In the gentleman's own words we continue : ' One cloud, as if to welcome our entrance into their region, attended us so closely that we began to feel a friendship for it, and the balloon, guided by our pilot-cloud, followed pretty nearly the course of the river, as the air being very clear we could for a considerable time distinguish sights and hear sounds from earth—bells, drums, &c., &c., and then all on earth was lost to us, and I began to feel cold and numbed, my senses even getting into a state of torpor ; I forced myself to swallow wine, and soon after experienced tingling pains and a sensation of soreness all over, as if I had been beaten ; headache, thirst, hunger, with difficulty of breathing succeeded. Land was no longer visible, but the compass showed we were drifting westward, like a new Columbus, but in a frailer bark. What had we beneath us, land or water, city or forest, mountain or marsh ? I felt some anxiety and much awe, but no paralyzing terror ; a sudden death by drowning would be preferable to the prolonged torments of it by famine. Self-preservation is one of our strongest instincts, so I determined on at once quickly descending, great as such a risk might prove in unpractised hands. At last we saw a few sailing vessels like white specks, then a mountain range seen at intervals ; then they too were hidden, for a cloud so black would envelope the balloon that we could not even see it from our car ; the friendly pilot-cloud

again appeared, peals of thunder rolled amid the clouds, tossing the sound from one to the other as if playing with the elements. There was a great storm, and a sound as of many waters rushing ; I felt we were coming down too rapidly, and if it were not for a higher than mortal help, no doubt our lives could not have been preserved. In the midst of all this turmoil, and catching a sound of bells and shouting, completely exhausted in strength, and nearly incapable of thinking, we were dashed with violence in a wood on the borders of the noble Shannon. I was just able to send up a heartfelt thanksgiving prayer, and then fainted ; on recovering I fully determined that my aerial excursions were over for ever.' "

Gerald.—" Another word must not be said about balloons, or else my treatise will be robbed of its most interesting details."

Mr. Desmond.—" But I may advise Harold to start a second treatise on the subject of ' Air Guns,' of which I shall merely state that it has been said they were well known and generally used 200 years B. C., and air canes also."

Kathleen.—" We have been so long floating in this ocean of air that our only chance of getting through it this evening, and safe to land, is by some of us in turn starting up with a separate treatise on its most suggestive and remarkable wonders. After this introduction, you are prepared to hear of a treatise from me too, and, knowing my love for gardens and flowers, will not be surprised to hear my theme, ' Air Plants ;'

those mysterious ones that grow and live thriving without soil, and no roots in the earth ; long supposed to be solely nourished by air. Were plants always anchored to the ground by genuine roots, the mistle-toe would no longer hang golden boughs amid the old gray thorns and apple trees of midwinter, showing her living pearls amid stems that wear the semblance of death ; no lichens would enrich as they do the oldest turret of this castle, nor orchids perch like birds on the boughs. It is not generally known that they are strictly aerial plants, deriving their nourishment from the air and decaying organic damp matter around them, and if planted in earth many of them will not live."

"And when Kathleen is writing her theme," said Edgar, "she can sit on an air cushion, and so consider over her 'air plants' in comfort. If I write an essay on this Enigma," continued Edgar, "it will be on the colour of the wind, for I heard the other day a man distinctly say that the colour of the wind he knew, and to maintain the truth, he showed the best of proof when he said he saw it clearly blew (blue)."

"Now, Edgar," interposed Grandmamma, "your remark is against all rule. You have distorted the sense, you have mis-spelled to give it point, and it is not true of my Enigma, which I describe as colourless ; so, only for the very absurd way you have quoted the lines in the midst of such high intellectual altitudes, and brought us all down to a hearty laugh round the fire, I should feel a bit disposed to punish

you by allowing you to feel how clearly blew (blue) it is outside the Ebony Room to-night ; but I am not so cruel, and, instead, desire you to fetch and put on some more logs of wood, for unless we get on more rapidly than during the past hours, we shall not come to the end of our Enigma before morning, even with the safety-valves of treatises and essays with distorted words. Now let us take up our thread at that part of the Enigma which caused Gerald to guess air, namely, 'three distinct kinds belong to me, each with totally different properties containing, amongst other things, life and death.'

Gerald.—"Although I guessed air, I feel quite unable to explain this part clearly to others ; but we all know air contains the very essence of life and vegetation, that neither plants nor animals could exist without it, and that atmospheric air is a combination of three aerial fluids, namely, mephitic or corrupted air, vital or pure air, and fixed air. The first singly extinguishes flame, and would soon destroy life ; without the second we could not breathe, nor a candle burn ; the third extinguishes flame, and instantly destroys life."

Edgar.—"That explains 'I have been known to cause a quicker death than any other thing.' I have read accounts of terrible experiments on poor dogs being put into caves and holes containing fixed air, and at once they are deprived of life."

Kathleen.—"The air can be calm, and give gentle breezes, and yet we hear of its being too strong and

exciting in some places for delicate people. I know some people that Brighton air would soon kill, although bracing to most persons."

Harold.—"I remember seeing a picture of Æolus, represented as an old man with a long white beard, holding a sceptre in his hand, sitting on a rock, occasionally smiting it with the sceptre, at which signal the winds rush out; and he maintained he had the power of directing their course."

Grandmamma.—"I think, Harold, we need not go to a heathen god to find 'Who causeth the winds to blow.'"

"Granny must not be vexed with me," said little Edgar, "if I also tell about Æolus, as he is sketched in one of my lesson-books, standing in a grotto with a muscle-shell in his mouth, and a pair of bellows under his feet, blowing away."

Norah.—"Oh you funny fellow, I suppose you think he was making wind, as you fancied trees did."

Kathleen.—"I am sure we all know Mrs. Hemans' lines on 'The Voice of the Wind'—

'Many a voice is thine, O Wind,
Full many a voice is thine;
From every scene thy wing o'ersweeps
Thou bearest a sound and sign.
A minstrel wild and strong thou art,
With a mastery all thine own;
The spirit is thy harp, O Wind!
That gives the answering tone.'

Mary.—"There will be no end of ideas starting up every moment, now that we have come to winds, many

voices, and listening to the silver music that rings out from the pale mountain bells swayed by the wind ; for we see even mute creation bow before his viewless wings as he careers o'er this rocking world."

Norah.—"The wild wood minstrels sing my lullaby, old nurse often told me—

'Loud wind, strong wind, where art thou blowing?
Into the air, the viewless air, to be lost there.'"

Edgar.—

" 'From east to west, from north to south,
A roving life is mine,
Now howling round the snow-topp'd fir,
Now playing with the vine.
From beggars' rags to princes' robes,
From hut to court I go ;
I rule the golden clouds above,
And drive the waves below.
Away, away, I cannot stay,
I hear the ploughboy's song ;
But I can chant as carelessly,
And whistle just as long.' "

Kathleen.—"Granny is quite true in calling the air 'unsteady and fickle.'

'Beautiful clouds ! I have watched ye long.
Fickle but bright as a fairy throng
Of aerial sprites at play.'

But the poem I am thinking of is too long to repeat ; the last lines of it end thus :—

'Oh where is the eye that doth not love
The glorious phantoms that glide above ?
That hath not looked on the realms of air
With wondering soul and bursting prayer.
And where is the spirit that hath not bow'd
To its God, at the shrine of a passing cloud.' "

Grandmamma.—"We have now nearly gone through a general reading of this Enigma, and yet not half through its subject (air's thousand wonders); many of them not named, some just alluded to, when speaking of the gases and chemical properties of air. As Gerald and Harold have each quite decided on writing a treatise, I propose that Edgar should try his hand on meteors, those strange moving bodies in the air occasioned by electricity; and he can indulge his fancy, and even make his essay amusing as well as instructive, meteors embracing such a variety, from the great and glorious 'Aurora Borealis,' or northern lights, and the brilliant shooting stars seen in clear calm weather, down to the mysterious 'Will-with-the-wisp,' or 'Jack-o'-lanthorn,' frequently seen over bogs and damp places, seldom more than six feet from the ground, misleading and frightening travellers in its rapid light darting from spot to spot. But I can't permit any of Will's mischievous doings to be mentioned to-night, although I thank you very much for all the apt quotations on clouds and wind's many voices, elucidating this aerial subject. Clouds may well be called fickle, for—

'They grasp the lightning and fling it on earth,
All flashing and wild as a maniac's mirth;
They cavern the thunder, and bravely it roars,
While the forest groans and avalanche pours:
They launch the torrent with headlong force,
Till the rivers hiss in their boiling course.
They come, and their trophies are scattered around,
In the wreck on the waters, the oak on the ground.' "

Kathleen.—"As my essay must be upon air plants,

I must reserve all my information respecting them for it ; but beg permission to give a few remarks that are suited to this Enigma, and were suggested by my looking at a vessel coming up the river to-day, and passing under the Ebony Room window, when Aunt Eva said it would have had no chance of getting safely to anchor after last night's storm, were it not for the guidance from the lighthouse at the entrance of the harbour. This lighthouse was made out of one of the strong fort castles of the days gone by, when the Irish chieftains guarded the ports well : but in later times the shipwrecks became so numerous, and the wreck-wood drifted in such abundance to this island and neighbouring coasts, that the Government converted the old feudal castle into a safety beacon. At Beede, in Cornwall, 'The Storm Tower' is very picturesque (being an imitation of the famous Temple of the Winds), built at the extreme edge of the top of the cliff, south of the breakwater. It is usually occupied by the coastguard body as their best 'look out ;' but it is said that in a real storm it is quite a fearful thing to sit in it and listen to the terrific gusts of wind which come against it with unbroken force. Though at a great height, the small, strong, protected windows are frequently smashed by the stones and pebbles driven up the side of the cliff by the power of the wind. In these wonderful days for inventions, and since poor Admiral Fitzroy's observations and calculations, the regular 'storm signals' are duly made."

"Yes," said Mary, "they are; but though I believe

in many things, 'art is but nature better understood,' yet I am inclined to keep to the plain and one reading of 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;' and that it is only when He rebukes the wind and the sea there will be a great calm."

Grandmamma.—"Dear children, there is a beautiful song of praise which you have all heard sung in church, named in the Prayer Book 'The Benedicite Omnia Opera,' Latin words which just mean 'Bless ye, all works,' calling on all God's creatures to praise and magnify His great name for ever. This has been named the Song of the Three Children, owing to the statement in the Apocrypha that it was sung in the fiery furnace by 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,' whose Hebrew names are in the last verse. Some can't understand how the voiceless ice and snow, the rolling sea and floods, the lightning, clouds, and rain, can praise God; but they remind us that we and all God's creatures praise and serve Him best by 'doing His will;' and in the 148th Psalm (which is something like this song) we read 'wind and storm fulfilling His word;' therefore we can sing, 'O ye winds of God, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever;' and when, as last night, the storm tries all its strength against this old island castle, instead of sinking into fear, remember 'Who hath gathered the wind in His fists.'"

"The wind is not blowing away our ideas now,"

said little Edgar, "for wonderful things are coming out of the clouds, which, according to the answer in my lesson-book as to what they are, says, 'vapours suspended in the air;' and as the air is lighter in proportion to its distance from the surface of the earth, none but the lightest clouds can sustain themselves at a certain height; therefore on high mountains we get above the clouds, and it is not unusual to see the clouds pouring down in rain in the valley, while bright sunshine gilds the mountain top,"

Mary.—"Our wonder ceases at all these mighty things of air, and the havoc caused by wind, when we consider 'Who maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh on the wings of the wind;' Who led His people through the passage of the Red Sea and through the wilderness. You all know of the moving pillar which appeared to the Israelites in their march and subsequent wanderings—the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, and as it moved, or was still, so were the children of Israel during forty-two encampments. To this pillar they owed their safety by night in the passage through the Red Sea, for while to Pharaoh's host it seemed as clouds and thick darkness or threatening flame, to God's own people it was a cheering, guiding light. Clouds have often been made the medium of a miracle to us children of earth: 'Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand;' after Elijah's servant had six times looked in vain, yet immediately after the little cloud was seen, the heavens were soon 'black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.' The whirlwind that Elisha

saw as taking up his master Elijah in the chariot to the far-off land, was just what the cloud that received 'our blessed Lord' out of the sight of His disciples at Bethany was to the ascending Saviour. But," continued Mary, "I fear that I am preventing other remarks, though merely naming a few of the wonders connected with clouds."

"No, no, no, cried several voices; and," added little Edgar, "if we do find you are speaking too long, I know what I shall recommend you to write."

"Not another treatise, I hope," said Mr. Desmond, "as already so many are springing out of this airy subject, one on 'the balloon,' 'air gun,' 'air plants,' 'will-o'-the-wisp,' so what can be Mary's?"

"Better subject than any of you have taken," said Edgar; "and 'weathercock' as you, Norah, called me often, I can tell of a theme not at the mercy of the wind, if guided by the hand that rules it; a fit topic for Mary to write a sermon on."

"I guess the subject," said Kathleen, "Prayer—real prayer, what our clergyman explained so clearly on Sunday in his sermon; and as we were crossing the ferry, Mary promised Edgar when we got back to the castle she would read him an extract from a favourite author on prayer."

"And Mary fulfilled her promise," said Edgar; "and it is from remembering it so well that I know we could not find better ideas for 'winding up,' as Granny calls it, this Enigma."

Mary, therefore, had no alternative but to get her book and read the following extract:—

"It is a wonderful thought how far a prayer can go. Shoot up an arrow into the air, it will seem to mount very high, but it will soon fall back to earth; uncage a lark and let it fly into the air, let it mount and sing till out of sight almost at heaven's gate, yet the little warbler will be soon beaten back by the winds, or reach an atmosphere in which it cannot breathe, and so will sink down with weary wing to the earth again. The eagle may soar and mount high on its strong pinions, towering far above the snow mountains; but it, too, will find its limit, and as certainly as the little lark, it will return back to its nest in the rock. But send up a prayer; send up a true prayer, and nothing will, nothing can draw it back to earth. It will rise above the hills, above the clouds, above the stars, and pierce even to the very Throne of God. The creature offering it remains below, smiting his breast like the poor publican, or in prison, like the chained Apostle; but the prayer is rising high and rapid on its way, and neither the stars in their courses, nor the wandering winds, nor the "Prince of the Power of the Air," can prevent it from reaching the haven of its destiny.'"

Grandmamma.—"I feel truly happy, dear children, that Edgar's suggestion has been the means of our hearing these most beautiful ideas on prayer; also so simply doing what is ever my aim, in even the recreation hours, leading your thoughts from nature's mysteries to nature's God. We have all been carried in thought, during Mary's reading, far above earth's shadows and clouds, and might well rest in the haven

she has guided us into ; but there is one mountain-top that I shall try to picture for you in its brightness and its clouds ; this one, generally believed to be ' Mount Tabor,' the ascent laborious, but at the summit a beautiful area surrounded by lofty trees. ' Here our Blessed Lord went up to pray,' leaving all, but the favoured three, at the foot of the Holy Mount. Since the Garden of Eden was closed to man, heaven had not visited earth in such a manner as here on the Holy Mount. The Son of God, as man, kneeling on the ground, and while He prayed, the fashion of His countenance altered, His raiment became white as light ; two heavenly guests, ambassadors from the court on high, approached, and spake of His decease, of His death upon the cross for the sin of the world ; Moses, the representative of the law ; Elias of the prophets ; messengers from the Eternal City, Saints Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the Church on earth ; the angelic choir around ; and while our Blessed Lord spoke, ' a bright cloud overshadowed them,' and they feared as they entered into the cloud ; they feared they might see God and die, for no earthly eye hath seen or can see Him. But there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, ' This is my beloved Son ; hear Him : ' and then they fell on their faces and lay trembling until Jesus touched them, and said, ' Arise, be not afraid ; ' and when they lifted their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only, the thick cloud hid Moses and Elias from earthly vision ; but the voice had passed, the cloud soon after vanished, the supernatu-

ral sight faded ; the glorious revelation completed, and all was as though it had never been. Saint Peter, to confirm his teaching, alludes to this glorious scene on Mount Tabor's summit when he writes in one of his Epistles, ' We were eye-witnesses of His majesty when He received from God the Father honour and glory, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; and this voice, which came from heaven, we heard when we were with Him in the Holy Mount,' almost the gate of heaven."

" Clouds," said Gerald, " have, indeed, manifested much to mortals, and many proofs have been brought forward during this evening's consideration of the Air Enigma ; but I remember some more. In a cloud God came on Mount Sinai. At the dedication of Solomon's Temple, we read that a cloud filled the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, ' for the glory of the Lord filled the house.' And we have just been hearing that Moses and Elias returned in the bright cloud from whence the voice came, to their heavenly home."

Mary.—" As I do not intend following Edgar's suggestion of writing a sermon, I shall repeat some sacred words bearing on this solemn and important subject to us all, old and young. After our Blessed Lord had spoken His last words to His disciples, we read, ' He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and while He blessed them He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. . . . And while

they looked stedfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold, two men in white said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus Which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." For we shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, sending His angels to gather His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.' "

Aunt Eva.—"Even already Faith sees the invisible world dawning over the visible, and beholds this earth as a theatre of Divine and often glorious manifestations. Faith can trace everywhere the footsteps and government of the Triune God : in the cloud on the mountain's brow it sees God's mantle ; in the winds which bend the forest trees and curl the fleecy clouds, His messengers ; in the lightnings, His ministers to do His service ; in the muttering thunder, His voice. Faith has eagle's wings, and soars to regions beyond sight. 'Jesus, Blessed Mediator, Thou the airy path Thyself hast trod, and wilt yet appear on clouds of glory seated ; and while we are still pilgrims below, from the throne of grace our spirits can soar, where we may pray, and never cease till time shall be no more.' "

Grandmamma.—"We have this evening been especially led from the Enigma produced for your recreation to the subject of Prayer, and as we believe our Blessed Lord has ascended into the heavens, so may we also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with

Him continually dwell, and gain the wisdom of the just, that so, at His second coming to judge this world, we may be found acceptable in His sight, and ever keep before us His various ways of drawing earth's wanderers to His fold ; for, by the leading of a star, He manifested His name to the Gentiles, and, having overcome death, has opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Let us remember our Father in heaven is always more ready to hear than we to pray ; and willing to give us more than we desire or deserve. We may now close, as we usually do, our evening by singing a hymn, and all uniting in prayer."

" The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word and deed and mind :
While with the Father and the Son
Their fellowship they find.
Nor prayer is made on earth alone,
The Holy Spirit pleads ;
And Jesus on the Eternal Throne,
For mourners intercedes.
O Thou by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of Prayer Thyself hast trod,
Lord, teach us how to pray."

Grandmamma Desmond's dread of fire led her to use many precautions to prevent such a calamity occurring at the Island Castle, its peculiar situation cutting it off from any quick assistance usually given on such calamities. Certainly the walls of this old castle were both thick and strong, and had stood against nearly all the elements in turn ; but our readers cannot have forgotten that every room in it was now

panelled, and consequently wood so dry would prove a rapid guide to fire if it were to break out ; therefore, amongst her numerous safety plans, the most prominent was the manner she contrived the lights all through the castle. She had lamps of every kind, from the steady oil one in the Ebony Room down to the horn lantern into which she did allow a candle ; but she insisted on every one of the portable lights being safety ones, without a possibility of the flame coming in contact with anything. The party, as we have seen on this, the third recreation evening, remained up unusually late, and the only remains of the logs of wood heaped on the embers by Edgar were lifeless ashes. Before Aunt Eva extinguished the oil lamp, she lighted, and gave to each of the party their own separate portable light. The moment that the door of the Ebony Room was opened such a rush of air came round the corridor, that any unprotected light must have been blown out, and the weird sound which came with the breeze might have been alarming in the dark to the young folk ; as it was it proved quite exciting enough to send little Edgar (leading the way) scampering fast up the steep spiral stone stairs, and scarcely allowing himself time to cast a hasty glance at the loophole windows of the turret, which were white with snow, but heartily thanking Granny for her safety-lamp invention, alike securing them from the horrors of darkness and the dangers of flames.

But once Edgar set foot on the threshold of his own door, he remembered the calming thoughts on prayer

they had just been listening to, and he soon fell into a peaceful sleep.

Claiming the right of "the bird of the air to tell the matter," we shall give the words it last heard Edgar repeating before he entered the regions of dreamland.

" Spread tents of angels round my bed.
Let not the spirits of the air,
While I slumber me ensnare ;
But keep thy children free from harms,
Clasped in thine everlasting arms.
Clouds and thick darkness are Thy throne,
Thy wonderful pavilion ;
Oh dart from thence a shining ray,
And then our midnight shall be day."

Here we may now draw the curtain, and leave all to that chief of mysteries, "a dream." "Though Scripture had given the holier theme, the well-turned words of wisdom : yet Fancy, on her swallow's wing, skimmed the deeper waters ;" but even the youngest of the party had learned that nothing is a trifle, let it be light as air or the laugh of recreation.

THE FOURTH EVENING.



CHRISTMAS DAY had fallen on Wednesday this year that we are introducing our readers to the circle in the "Ebony Room," therefore it was on Thursday evening, S. Stephen's Day, the Harp with its echoes fell on the ears of the happy family party; so on Friday evening, St. John the Evangelist's Day, the Bell, and the many memories connected with it, resounded; while on Saturday evening, the festival of the Holy Innocents, we were travelling through the realms of air, winging many hallowed thoughts on high, although reverently weaving them in the recreation Grandmamma Desmond had arranged for the evening pastime of days that she, with all her household, kept according to ancient custom and the Church's teaching. The weather not permitting of their crossing the ferry to get to public worship, she had the usual service and sermon for each holiday, with their own distinct lesson, read in one of the turret rooms set apart for the daily prayer in the castle, and where, on the ringing of the prayer-bell at nine o'clock every morning, the whole family

assembled. We scarcely need to describe this devotional room, its oaken stalls and desks, with Prayer Books and "the Holy Scriptures," as all who read these pages must feel assured of everything being in perfect keeping that Grandmamma Desmond had the arranging of for herself or friends. A small but sweet-toned organ was also in this room, praise as well as prayer daily ascending from it. Aunt Eva taught here the little rustic choir, whom she collected regularly twice a-week, and considered any trouble she might have had in training fully compensated by the manner the children sang the Christmas hymns and carols, their hearts and voices in harmony.

As we drew Edgar's curtain on Saturday night with prayer still ascending through the air and sounding in our ears, we shall not describe Sunday, spent in its holiest, happiest sense by every member of this happy family assembled at the Island Castle. All Monday, and until a late hour of that night, every one was fully occupied for the same cause, namely, to contribute some help and make clothes for the families of six fishermen who, having gone out with their nets early on that morning, the boat must have been upset, and all lives lost; for three of the bodies had been drifted to nearly their own doors, but none to tell the sorrowful story. It was, therefore, not until Tuesday evening, "the last day of the old year, the eve of the new one," that any of the party could find time or inclination to assemble for recreation in the "Ebony Room" for the reading of the fourth Enigma; but

Aunt Eva finding all were anxious to hear it, read as follows :—

ENIGMA IV.

“I am ancient and modern, old and new, began with life, and in one sense end with time, in another, continue throughout eternity. I am of the feminine gender, and of course gentle and soft, though yielding, like most of my sex, too much to the powers of association, and varying according to their pleasure. I am to be found in every part of the world ; I consider that I was too severely punished for a fault peculiarly belonging to my sex, although, in that instance, it was to save my friends. I am full of faults, and yet possess great charms, being necessary to self-love, and quite devoted to it, yet called on to sound my voice again and again by every one enamoured with it, and anxiously courted for praise, which I never refuse to those who first praise me. I am morbidly sympathetic, but wholly devoid of all originality ; and though usually surrounded by beauty, grandeur, and repose in my home, seem not to notice them, being generally silent there ; yet you might infer, from my great capabilities and versatility, that I cannot be idle in my retirement, for, according to the approved of requisites for modern education, I am a perfect specimen, growing animated only in society, which, indeed, I appear but to live for, speaking every language better than my own, and though simple music suits me best, attempting the most intricate if it pleases my visitors. It would be

difficult to describe me, and being extremely shy, it causes so much awkwardness that it might dispel the few charms left to me. Disappointment in early life may in some degree excuse me, but I fear one great fault destroys any good in me, and being my chief means of existing I cannot give it up, namely, mimicking all who associate with me; and though I sometimes do really 'weep with those who weep,' and laugh with the merry ringing laugh of childhood, yet I fear it gains me no credit for having heart. I have been named as the only fit wife for the representative of universal nature, agreeing in all things, and never contradicting, could alone be deemed worthy of such a love. This description solely belongs to my earthly life, as if my voice is to sound in another, which I have some reason to expect, it will be only in the highest and most noble strains, to increase, if possible, the continual glorious hymn of praise for ever and for ever."

Aunt Eva had scarcely ceased reading when her voice was again heard breaking the silence that for a longer or shorter period invariably reigned after the production of an enigma in the Ebony Room; but she pleaded as her excuse for at once naming "Echo" as the answer, the fear that this evening might prove too short for its elucidation unless she thus plunged suddenly into its very mysterious history; for standing as they all then did upon the threshold of a new year, midway (as it were) between the death and resurrection of nature, so typical of our own, the season was

one peculiarly suggestive for deep reflection, and Grandmamma would surely carry out the goodly custom of praying out the old year and in the new one. It was now but seven o'clock, and no doubt the fabled history of the evening's subject, with the noblest and highest sense the word could convey, might be fully gone into and discussed well before they were summoned by the prayer-bell to the "Turret Tower." The last Enigma, "Air," had kept them winged so long that she dreaded, unless they descended a little towards earth, they might vanish into air themselves.

Gerald.—"Well, Aunt Eva, you are also getting most ingenious by thus putting such a capital idea respecting 'Echo,' and letting us down through her medium gradually from our heights, for, according to the ancient fable, the beautiful nymph 'Echo' was daughter of 'Aer and Tellus,' or, the 'Air and Earth,' and one of Juno's attendants, highly gifted with vivacity of speech; but when Juno descended to earth one day, to punish the nymphs for their misdoings, 'Echo' talked so incessantly, and detained her by such long recitals, that it afforded the offending ones an opportunity of escaping, which vexed Juno so much that she turned 'Echo' into a rock, leaving her voice, but quite depriving her of the power of uttering more than a repetition of what was first addressed to her."

"Ah," said little Edgar, "this was being very severe on gentle, beautiful Echo; especially as by her talking she saved her friends and companions from punishment, and for evermore she was merely to repeat

faintly any passing sound, word, or note cast near her home."

Harold.—"There is another fable about the nymph Echo, namely, that she fell in love with the youth Narcissus, whom she met one day in her rambles through the woods. He was possessed of great beauty, both of countenance and figure; but being pleased only with himself, he despised all the nymphs save Echo, whom he listened to for a time, and then left her to languish from the continual echoing of his praises (self-love being insatiable), till she became a mere sound."

"Yes," said Kathleen, "he led her on in his vain, selfish love, to echo his admiration of himself until her echoes were not sufficient to satisfy him, elated as he was with the egotism of his person and attractions, and so he fled hastily from her; whereupon the despised nymph hid herself amid the grottoes, ruined buildings, and woods, until she pined away with grief, so that every part of her but her voice was consumed, and her bones said to be turned into stones."

Grandmamma.—"Thus proving the folly and sin of selfishness. People of this stamp are quite useless for every purpose, and shows us that, although self-love, rightly directed, is given to us like other gifts for a good purpose, yet that selfishness is fallen self-love."

Kathleen.—"As my allotted theme seems to be always some peculiar plant, such as air ones, or those with fabled origin, I had better now tell the history of

the Narcissus. Taking its name from this youth of exquisite form and beauty, who, scorning Echo's devotion to him, and flying from her, became weary and thirsty; he stooped on the margin of a brook to drink and quench his thirst, where, at sight of his own lovely form reflected in the water, he became so enamoured with it, believing it to be a living nymph as beautiful as himself, but seeming to avoid all his attempts to approach, that he fell into a melancholy despair that would have soon killed him, had not the gods, in pity to the vain deluded youth, changed him into the beautiful flower Narcissus, which ever since bears his name, often growing on the banks of streams and rivers. But as we are to be brief this evening, consider I have said enough of young Narcissus and sad Echo's tale."

"But may I not speak," said Edgar, "of 'fair daffodils,' called by the shepherds 'daffodillies,' long, long before vain Narcissus was turned into one of the most beautiful of its various species, which ever since has borne his name? I also could name many other sweet flowers of this lily tribe, now seldom called the daffodillies, 'that come before the swallow dares and take the winds of March with beauty,'

'And then my heart with pleasure fills,
'And dances with the daffodils.'"

Kathleen.—"You seem all joyous in speaking of the daffodil, and yet, under its other name, Narcissus, the poets invariably address it in a sorrowful strain;

for instance, Arise, speak thy sorrows, Echo, rise ; here by this streamlet where thy love did pine, whose memory ever lives fresh shrined in this yellow flower that bears his name ; that trophy of self-love and spoil of nature who was transformed into this drooping flower hanging its repentant head back from the stream, as if it wished it had never looked in such a flattering mirror."

Mary.—" But self-love never yet could look on truth ; even Echo in vain the flying boy pursued :

' Himself alone the foolish youth admired,
And with fond love the shadow he desired,
O'er the glassy lake with fruitless tears he grieves ;
His spreading fingers shoot into verdant leaves.
Through his pale veins green sap now gently flows,
And in a short-lived flower henceforth his beauty blows.' "

Gerald.—" And so let vain Narcissus' fate warn us all that beauty's but a transient boon at best, and that we should never be vain, either of it or our acquirements, lest we fall in love with ourselves, ever craving for an Echo, seeking it in every labyrinth, and listening evermore for it in life's many windings, end in a fruitless, useless existence."

Kathleen.—" This early spring flower, daffodil or Narcissus, is a good emblem of such spirits as these are that Gerald alludes to, which flourish and are admired in their youth, but disappoint and produce no fruit when they come to full age."

Harold.—" If Aunt Eva had not so early in the evening named Echo, I feel sure I for one, and probably others in this room, would have guessed it when

considering over that part of the Enigma where she is spoken of as the only fit wife for the representative of universal nature, for we all know Pan, or Nature, is the fabled god of the universe ; therefore ' Echo ' is very elegantly taken for the marriage and voice of the universe, she alone being deemed worthy of such an union, which could repeat truly all the words of the universe, and is not anything else but its image and voice and reflection, never adding a word of her own but solely to repeat, and so echoes roll from soul to soul, and live for ever and for ever reiterations."

" Pan is president over the mountains, patron of a country life, guardian of flocks and herds ; he was especially the god of shepherds, also adored by fishermen, and every one leading a rural life, because such live more according to nature. The symbols one always sees Pan represented with in his pictures, are the shepherd's crook and pipe of reeds," said Edgar.

Gerald.—" Quick as you are at taking up Harold's words, and truly describing Pan's insignia, can you tell why, and explain the reason of his being thus always represented ? "

Edgar's silence allowed of Gerald's showing the twofold meaning of these symbols ; the shepherd's crook denoting the power and empire by which Pan governed the universe, and the shepherd's pipe, made out of the stalks of seven reeds all of different lengths, and giving various sounds, proving the harmony of all things in nature, for he charmed every animate thing with his pipes, even the flocks around him listening,

while Echo again and again repeated the sweet sounds which note by note were taken up and reverberated amidst the stony rocks.

Aunt Eva.—"If this were the season for boating excursions, and when we rowed down the river resting occasionally by some deep-wooded glen or ruined castle, listening to notes coming from the hollows of the hills, every harsh tone mellowed, while the softer ones from the horn flowed musically away until fainting into distant reverberation, you would all exclaim, 'Can such be a mere echo of rude blasts?'"

"I feel inclined," said Mary, "to suggest that some choir of spirits had caught each tone as it came from the peasant's horn, and had deified it among the clouds, repeating it over and over again in divine variations, as if to show man how the poor sounds he gave might one day become ravishing when to the symphony of silver strings, they rang out amid seraph harps and choral harmonies of heaven; and all we do take in by hearing are but echoes from the outer world, responses to the inquiring spirit, the world's voice speaking to the soul. Music comes to us we cannot tell whence nor how. Handel and Haydn gave us sounds which will only be lost when music of more amazing power shall awake the world."

Gerald.—"If it were a tale we were listening to this evening, here comes its moral that Mary is already beginning; however, even fables must have their moral as well as stories."

"Very true," said Grandmamma, "and very right

also ; but in the present case the Enigma is simply working out, and as we began it by descending from air to earth, by telling of Echo's fabled origin, and doing away with everything about her save her voice, you must allow as much as is possible to be drawn from it, proving its power and undying use ; and even by it lifting us up from earth again to the realms of air, there to listen to echoes from our home."

"It has been well and wisely said," remarked Mr. Desmond, "that our lives ought to be one continued echo of the angels' song, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, goodwill to all.'"

"Yes," continued Grandmamma, "if this could be realized Earth must cease to be our probation state. Sin—sin as it now is around us, prevents our echoing that song, sung by the multitudes of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying what we should try to echo even faintly. The etheriality of music is doubtless one of the reasons why we believe that creatures of a higher order than ourselves are especially given to song, and that all immortal beings find the only sufficient expression of their emotions in praise."

Gerald.—"It was a splendid theory of the ancient pagan sages, that the whole visible heavens were melodious with music and her echoes, which gifted ears were privileged to hear when star sang to star."

Mary.—"And it is a still grander belief of modern Christian men, that within the invisible heavens angels that excel in strength and undying human spirits, never cease their immortal song, with its unceasing echoes from the sacred dome of our eternal home."

Grandmamma.—"Music and her echoes form the one universal language which, when all others were confounded, the confusion of Babel left unconfounded. All can sing together, however vain to talk to each other; and if this apply to earthly sounds, how much more to heavenly? Though all else in the future state be dim to us, and in all respects but matters of faith or hope, not realization, this at least can be entered into, that all the children of Adam may unite in a common song."

Mary.—"In the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem described in the book of The Revelation, we read, 'I heard a voice,' so true is the assertion I lately met, that music is itself an echo from heaven, sounds that have escaped from some higher sphere, outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound, truly echoes from our home—the voice of angels, or the Magnificat of saints."

Grandmamma.—"Is it not wonderful that the echoes of those sounds which the musical ear has once taken in, live on in the depths of the soul, and supply material upon which genius can draw for its resources? Let us never forget that home in eternity to which we are all travelling, and are listening, (since the day of our Blessed Lord's presence on earth,) for the first echoes of that trumpet which shall sound and awake even the dead to the consciousness of a new existence. Some of you, dear children, must know that beautiful hymn of the Latin Church, 'Dies Iræ,' in which the solemnities of the Last Judgment and the

trump of doom are echoed in mournful music from the wailing lines. Sir Walter Scott translated this sacred song. Luther's Hymn reads like an echo of it, and what is it itself but the echo of passages from the inspired writings ; even Handel, when he composed the Messiah, went to the original for the words which are echoed in his undying music."

Gerald.—"I think we bid fair to be carried not only late into the night, as in the Air Enigma, but through Echo into next year, although we were warned by Aunt Eva, early in the evening, of its ending sooner than on the preceding ones, in spite of all the wonders that were likely to turn up in our conversation, whose echoes might ring in every quarter of the globe."

Grandmamma.—"And what are our lives but echoes of the days gone by, and now that we have almost crossed the threshold of a new year, what remains to us of the past one, save an echo? To any one who, like myself, has lived to see so many pass away, with the passing year the voice of the new one ever seems to echo, passed away."

Her voice betrayed depths in her heart which she, perhaps, scarcely knew of, although she was one of those characters well acquainted with that inward stillness in which the ear is painfully listening to catch the echo of voices long hushed. Her voice soon regained its calmness, and being determined that the last Echoes of the evening and the last Echoes of the year should be praise, she spoke in the following words :—

“For the countless mercies of the past year, for the watchfulness of our Father in heaven, which has encompassed us by day and by night ; guarding us in paths we knew not, shielding us from dangers we foresaw not ; for all the enjoyments of health and friends, for the lessons of sickness, trial, and sorrow, we praise Thee, O Lord. For a home in that land which is our haven of rest, for freedom of access to Thy Holy Word, and for all the unclouded light of Thy truth, we praise Thee, O Lord.”

Here the old lady paused, and looked around the gathered circle ; her eye grew dim as it rested on vacant places in that circle, but she continued in her unusually sweet voice—

“For all who have passed away from amongst us with passing years ; for their presence with us once in heartfelt joy ; for their departure hence, trusting in a Risen Saviour ; for their present rest, we join in the strain now echoing from golden harps, we praise Thee, O Lord. For our Father's care and our Mother's (the Church's) love, for all the blessings of this still beautiful world, we praise Thee, O Lord.”

And so alike youth and age united in echoing the Hallelujah. If we listen attentively we may hear the voice of nature, animate and inanimate, joining in the choral hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Creator of all. Hallelujah is the voice of the waves, and the mountains reply Hallelujah ; Hallelujahs float along in the murmuring streams, in the whisperings of the forests, and even in the silent courses of the stars the

spirit may hear the mystic Hallelujahs. Grant that our lives may be their continual Echo.

“Open our eyes, Thou Sun of life and gladness,
That we may see that glorious world of Thine !
It shines for us in vain while drooping sadness
Enfolds us here, like mist. Come, Power benign,
Touch our chill'd hearts with vernal smile,
Our wintry course do Thou beguile ;
Nor by the wayside ruins let us mourn,
Who have th' eternal towers for our appointed bourne.”

THE FIFTH EVENING.



THE New Year was some days old before the enigma-guessing party again assembled in the Ebony Room. Various circumstances caused this interruption ; guests had come unexpectedly to stay at the Castle, who, of course, required much of Grandmamma Desmond's time and thoughts. Also, the white world had dissolved into a green one ; for the New Year opened with bright sunshine ; consequently the young folk had plenty of out-of-door recreation, and therefore were not so entirely dependant for it in the Ebony Room, as when snowed up the week before. All the party came in very fresh, and ready for the new enigma on this evening ; and having first heaped up plenty of wood for the fire, anticipating a very long evening, which, the sunshine being gone and exercise over, rendered a very necessary thought, Aunt Eva read as follows :

ENIGMA V.

" If the lovers of poetry heard the subject I have taken for my theme to-day they might cast me aside and smile scornfully, considering me as classed

amongst the things most despised and ugly to be met with in the journey through this world ; and yet at the very beginning of the labyrinth I am about threading for my readers I am myself puzzled to know what can be left unsaid on a subject so full of variety in appearance, size, use, and abuse. I was in the world before man, have increased much, am sometimes soft and yielding, though usually cold, hard, and insensible to the verifying of an ancient proverb ; yet I can show evident signs of anger, as at such times I become very warm and quite endanger the life of any one who dares to come near me then ; still my extremes of heat and cold come by nature, not by art. I have been made to give out some sweet musical notes, this, however, only by art's skill, not being naturally possessed of any voice ; I continually weep, which proves I have some sympathy in my strange nature ; at times my lot is cast very lowly, almost mean, at other times exalted and nobly used for sacred and highest purposes : sometimes looking very sad and lonely, and then brilliant and in company. I have preserved life, and I have also taken it away very painfully ; I have been many times the agent employed for a miracle. I have been found exquisitely beautiful without vanity, and yet when very rough and ugly have not been for this reason excluded from palaces, nor my fitting place amongst the great, good, and noble. I have been met upon the wide ocean gliding on over the waves without fear : I have also been seen very high in the air equally secure. Indeed, I

may at once say I can pass through air, earth, fire, and water unharmed. My colours are of nearly every known shade ; at times transparent and easily read through, at other times cold and impenetrable. Science, art, fame, flattery, comfort, remembrance, all require me and scarcely could have existed without me. In some degree I do soften time's destructive power over things animate and inanimate, yet often myself betray a worn appearance ; although man oftentimes has caused this look of " wear and tear," more than actual time. In every part of this world I am to be met with, and though sometimes alone, not usually so, for in choosing places where man's foot never trod, I am in company with my own species. Even in this world I am often beautiful, but far oftener frightful : but in the other life, where, according to sacred prophecy, I am to take a conspicuous place, it will there be only in my most brilliant and dazzling form. One word of one syllable unlocks my secret, so it is for you young friends to try your united skill in guessing immediately my mysterious name."

The usual silence after Aunt Eva's reading an Enigma was first broken this time by Grandmamma herself saying, " My dear children, although on the whole I am pleased at the manner you have expressed your knowledge and already worked out the four Enigmas discussed, yet I would have felt better satisfied, especially in Echo, if the younger members of the circle had used their voices oftener, and not left the explaining so entirely to the elders."

Edgar's courage rose at these words of Granny's, and with wonderfully little hesitation, considering he was the youngest of the party and only ten years old, confessed to his having guessed the one syllabled secret. The tears came into his eyes from very joy as he said, "I feel so sure I am right, so delighted to have just thought of the right word. Harold guessed 'The Harp,' Gerald 'The Bell' and 'Air,' and Aunt Eva scarcely gave us the opportunity of naming 'Echo,' beautiful 'Echo,' for whom I had such pity in her severe punishment, and though Granny did make the most of her voice in Echoes still ringing in our ears, yet we must now draw all we can from her bones, as Kathleen told us one fable said 'Echo was all consumed but her voice, and her bones were turned into stones.'"

Gerald.—"So this is the right key that you have found, little rogue; well, Edgar, you have proved yourself very clever."

Edgar.—"To prevent my getting vain at this good guess I must tell you that though I feel quite sure of Stones being the answer yet I could not explain half the Enigma, and some parts of it I can't make the stones fit into at all."

Grandmamma.—"Edgar is quite right in the word, so now let us all set about chiselling the stones as fast as we can; only think of poor Echo's bones furnishing us with a very deep subject and turning into stepping-stones, that have taken us so easily and with-

out any effort from almost heaven's gate, where the lark sings, to the depths of the earth."

Gerald.—"Here comes the first breaking of rocks into stones, for if we travel but little into Geology, and if we explain the words 'I was in the world before man,' I fear the usual safety-valve of an essay must be resorted to on this marvellous subject, as Granny forbids too learned explanations during recreation hours; but all writers on Geology now agree in admitting that there are evident marks of at least three distinct changes which have been co-extensive with the surface of this earth, and which must have occurred previously to its assuming its present form by which the order of things was wholly changed and all creatures living at such periods were entirely destroyed, followed in each case (it has been proved) by a new organization."

Aunt Eva.—"Yes, undoubted proofs render it quite certain that man was not a witness to any of these changes, but that it was after the last of them he was numbered among the dwellers upon the earth, and from this it follows that the flood (of which traditions exist in all countries) was not one of these changes alluded to."

Harold.—"I lately read an account stating that as each race of organized beings were successively overwhelmed by some destructive commotion which was to terminate in the formation of a new covering for the earth, various remains were left, and are still to be seen, which indicate the form and size of those lost

racés of animals, and prove them to have been very different from those at present in existence."

Gerald.—"These remains certainly give us distinct accounts of the beings who then inhabited this earth as we now do, but unfortunately they give us no distinct account of the causes that terminated in a change so destructive to them."

Mary.—"In this respect they resemble the gigantic and beautiful architectural remains which are found all over the world, especially in Asia and America, which date from a period, and belong to a race, of which we have no other tidings."

Grandmamma.—"We must not step any deeper into the depths of the earth, but leave its wonders to be more fully described in Gerald's 'Essay on Geology,' and we must progress in the Ebony Room recreation, having sufficiently proved that Stones were in the world before man, and that 'stones do grow' and increase, rocks shiver into bits, many things once with life turn to stone or petrify, and we hear of a great variety of kinds, soft, hard, cold, unyielding; but details of these and their purposes, and likewise the process many of them undergo a change in passing through, we must leave to Gerald to explain, and let us pass on to the angry signs that even stones (insensible to a proverb) can show."

Edgar.—"These signs come from the burning mountains and the fires said to be in the bowels of the earth even under the sea."

Harold.—"May we give you words, Edgar, to ex-

press properly about your warm stones 'Volcanic agency coming from subterraneous fire.' Earthquakes are supposed to arise from the action of water heated by these fires."

Edgar.—"Granny is right in saying these extremes of heat and cold come by nature, not art, and endanger life, if, during even a slight eruption from the angry mouth of a furious burning mountain, any living thing ventures to approach."

Harold.—"It is only by admitting these subterranean fires to exist we can account for all the eruptions and streams of liquid fire throwing up cones of lava in the open sea. Within the last few years volcanic cones in the Atlantic and near Graham Island in the Mediterranean, have risen suddenly in the sea and been soon levelled and dispersed by the waves."

Edgar.—"This accounts for what our Sea-Captain Uncle has told us of his having often met floating on the ocean reefs of pumice stone, which are the cinders from volcanoes; porous, and lighter than water on which it floats, this substance is many coloured, grey, white, reddish, and black, sometimes very hard and used to pave streets. These reefs are at times so large and formidable when bearing down on a ship, appearing like moving castles and mountains, as to be quite as much dreaded by crews as the iceberg."

Gerald.—"The largest known crater in the world is in one of the Sandwich Islands in the North Pacific, but volcanoes quite belong to the subject I am to write a treatise on."

Edgar.—"Oh, do allow me to put down in my little account of burning mountains and Iceland's Geysers, all the wonderful things I have lately found out about them, and the countries they belong to, I am too young to write an essay like you, Gerald, and Granny won't allow us to go on learning during recreation hours here ; so let me write down for myself and any friends near my own age, just the state of things as they appear, without explaining why, as Gerald will in his essay."

Grandmamma.—"Search and dig deep, dear children, I am not the least afraid of your ever finding a spot without the footprints of our Creator, so that viewing matters through this light, they form a bridge to pass from natural to revealed religion, and we can echo these words, 'Thy creatures have been my books, but Thy Scriptures much more ; I have sought Thee in the earth, but found Thee in Thy Temple.' Well may Geology be called the handmaid to Religion, for where is it the greatest and most scientific minds rest after they have pierced the thickest veils that envelop nature ; after grasping her subtlest elements and exploring regions beyond the solar way ; they rest upon the contemplation of the Great First Cause and hold it their highest glory to have made the evidence of His power and wisdom better understood by their fellow creatures ; and that the One Almighty Lord and Supreme First Cause of all things, He Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; Who before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and

the worlds were formed, is God, from everlasting to world without end."

Norah.—"The next words of the Enigma when explained may seem very like a traveller's story or invention, and certainly I can't call myself a traveller, having for the first time left home to come here to Granny's castle, and yet I have seen and heard what is alluded to in the words, 'I have been made to give out some sweet musical notes, this however, only by art's skill, not being naturally possessed of any voice.' It was a very ingenious little affair called the 'Rock Harmonium,' most sweet tones were brought from it of a soft, prolonged, and melancholy sound, caused by striking stones of different sizes (placed in a frame) with a stone hammer."

Gerald.—"This instrument is more a curiosity than likely to become of much use as an instrument."

Mary.—"And yet some of our greatest inventions have not been considered so or even valued during the lives of those who first thought of them, therefore the 'Rock Harmonium' may one day be brought to do wonders."

Norah.—"It was some stonecutters at their work first remarked the sweet tones produced by their tools on the rocks, and first suggested the idea to the inventor; but we cannot now remain explaining who first made one to be of any use in regulated sounds, as no doubt he tried many times before succeeding in making the stone of such a variety in its thickness as to cause the exact progression of sound; the keys

were placed in a row over the stones but not touching them, merely for the purpose of guiding the striker for each note."

Edgar.—"We must have great searching some day to find out all about this extraordinary instrument and its inventor."

Gerald.—"Under what class are we to put it?"

Grandmamma.—"There are three distinct classes of musical instruments, although a great variety in each—wind, stringed, and percussion; of course, the 'Rock Harmonium' belongs to the last.

Gerald.—"We read of Sermons in Stone and good in everything, but I certainly was not prepared for a sweet voice from a cold, hard stone, forming too almost a stepping-stone over the gulf which separates written symbols on the rocks, from sounds."

Edgar.—"We have all seen flags and stones weep; go into an old cathedral or passage, or even into a hot kitchen, when the wind blows in one particular point—I think it is from the South—and you will see water streaming down the walls and the flags as wet as if water had been thrown on them; you must explain the cause, Gerald, in your essay on Geology. I can only say Granny is right in the Enigma where it says, 'I continually weep, which proves I have some sympathy in my strange nature.'"

Kathleen.—"Can anything give a more dreary look than stone fences, scattered stones over fields and hill side, until one begins to think stones are the only things that do grow in such regions; and then how

sad the solitary grave marked by a stone ; or a heap of them to mark where some dark and terrible deed had been committed."

Grandmamma.—"Such are called cairns, which mean a conical heap of stones thrown loosely together, with usually a flat one on the top, and are to be found not only in Ireland, but in Wales, Scotland, and some parts of England, particularly Cornwall, and supposed to be memorials raised by the ancient Britons over their fallen chiefs, kings, or other persons of distinction. Cairns are of various sizes, thereby indicating, some think, different objects in their erection ; but the greater number are undoubtedly sepulchral, and have been found to contain urns, stone chests or coffins, and human remains, but some may have commemorated remarkable events, although I feel sure the greater number were for a purely religious purpose, some becoming almost pyramids.

Gerald.—"Quite different to these cairns are the Cromlechs or Druids' altars, which are wonderful though rude erections of great antiquity, found all over Ireland and in many parts of Great Britain, consisting of huge flat stones resting on others set on end and marvellously balanced ; some of the stones being thirty tons in weight. In deep forests, which gave the Druids natural temples, these remarkable people erected their altars, and circles of stones, ponderous masses of squared rock, that even to this day stand all over the country, monuments of power and skill ;

some think they were Celtic sepulchres, but others consider they were for sacrifice."

Mary.—"The first place in Scripture that we have any mention made of an altar is where we read that Noah's first act on coming out of the Ark, was to build an altar and offer burnt offerings upon it to the Lord, and God accepted the grateful, pious sacrifice of Noah, declaring 'That while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, should not cease.' No doubt but that sacrifice had been offered before Noah's, as we read of Abel's Sacrifice."

Gerald.—"The privilege of altar and sanctuary is very old, and their sanctity have been regarded from the earliest ages and by all creeds. The altar of the Western branch of the Catholic Church, was no doubt derived from the Hebrew place of sacrifice."

Harold.—"Woods and forests seem to have been the favourite temples of rude tribes who had a species of natural religion, and so in the aisles and fretted roof of a deep wood, or in the awful solitude and shadow of a trackless forest, they erected altars of stone to a Being of Whom they knew nothing, 'To the unknown God,' Whose presence they felt amid fears and mystery. These rude altars, supported on still ruder fragments of rock, served a double purpose, being used both for sacrifice and table for the simple preparation of their food."

Edgar.—"We must not forget to name the Rocking stones found in several parts of England, placed

on the edges of another in some mysterious way by the old Druids, that when touched by even a child's finger the upper or Rocking-stone will gently rock, but without the slightest danger of its falling ; the largest is in Cornwall, and although twenty horses could not move the stone which is supposed to be ninety tons in weight, yet a baby's hand could rock it."

Harold.—"When we return home let us pay a visit to Stonehenge, and there we shall see a fine collection of immense and extraordinary stones, some erect, some prostrate, scattered over Salisbury Plain, and supposed to be the ruins of a Druids' temple. In the centre of the sanctum, is to be seen the stone altar for the sacred fire ; some of the upright stones are twenty feet high, seven wide, and three feet thick."

Edgar.—"Pray, Harold, do not describe any more of Stonehenge, as I must find out a great deal more about the Druids, their customs, homes, and temples, and put it all down in my book of strange things, with the account of burning mountains and Geysers that I have already written down in it."

Norah.—"These stones are wonderful things, we shall never get through their uses or descriptions in one evening ; just think of Lithography and its wonders—Mosaic and its beauties, and antiquity ; it is now stated as a fact that the earliest likeness of our Blessed Lord was done in Mosaic."

Edgar.—"And do not forget to name the Loadstone and its powers."

Mary.—"You can search out for the wonders of each of these three last named stony marvels, because Granny had them all in view when writing her Enigma on Stones, but we must chisel deeper into it and bring up precious things, and reveal what God's power can draw even out of the stony rock."

Edgar.—"Oh, this is one of the miracles alluded to, Moses striking the Rock."

Mary.—"Yes; when the children of Israel thirsted in the wilderness and murmured against Moses, God worked a miracle and commanded Moses to smite the Rock in Horeb, and there came water out of it, and the people and their cattle and flocks all drank of it, and Moses builded an altar to the Lord: and God said to Moses, 'If thou wilt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.'"

Kathleen.—"Another time that stone was the agent used for a miracle, was at the giving of the Law; 'and He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of stone, written with the finger of God, and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables written on both their sides, and after the breaking of these tables of stone God commanded Moses to hew two tables of stone like unto the first, and early in the morning to take them up unto Mount Sinai, and while God was proclaiming the Law and His Glory He put Moses in a cleft of the rock.'"

Gerald.—"Before we pass on from the miracles that are connected with stones, we must allude to the twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of the high priest, on each stone was engraven the names of the tribes of Israel: these stones by shining in a miraculous manner, made known the Almighty's pleasure in several instances, particularly as the Jews went to battle, when the splendour of the stones of the 'Urim and Thummin' (the twelve precious stones in the breast-plate of the High Priest) announced the immediate presence of God.

Mary.—"We can merely name a few of the many cases and of the variety of ways in which stones have preserved life, and served as true and telling memorials of much now crumbled into dust, since the days of Jacob's awakening out of that sleep on the pillow of stone, which he afterwards set up for a pillar at Bethel, and said, This is the gate of Heaven; he poured oil on the stone, consecrated it, called it God's House, and vowed 'Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.' And Joshua took up a great stone and set it up under an oak that was by the Sanctuary of the Lord, and said unto all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us.' But I advise you to read for yourselves, in the fourth chapter of Joshua, the account of the twelve stones taken out of the river Jordan, and set up as a memorial of the Israelites passing through it."

Harold.—"The Jews raised heaps of stones as

memorials over their dead, and one of their ways for taking away the life of a criminal was by stoning. Achan was stoned to death by Joshua's command, and then they raised over him a great heap of stones. The King of Ai was hanged on a tree till eventide, and as soon as the sun was going down, Joshua commanded that they should take down his body from the tree and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones that remaineth unto this day."

Norah.—"Absalom was taken down from the oak tree where he was killed, and cast into a great pit in the wood, and they laid a very great heap of stones upon him."

Grandmamma.—"We may truly call them stones of memorial, for without a sound they preach a deep warning to us ; but we must begin without longer delay to chisel still deeper these hard stones before launching into the wonders and beauties of architecture and sculpture. I must notice the pillar that Absalom in his lifetime, had reared up for himself, which is in the king's dale ; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance ; and he called the pillar after his own name, and it is called unto this day Absalom's Pillar."

Edgar.—"May we not say a word about the Tower of Babel, or about the stone from his sling, that David slew the giant with."

Grandmamma.—"Your alluding to these wonders is enough ; we have still so much work before us, and the evening advances."

Mr. Desmond.—"Last Summer I visited the Island of Iona, a small but celebrated one of the Hebrides, also called Icolmkill. As a seat of learning and seminary for those pious missionaries who Christianized the rude inhabitants between the fifth and ninth centuries, this isle must ever take precedence ; in 563 St. Columba founded here a cathedral, convent, and monastery ; other religious edifices were raised during the next two centuries, but none more celebrated than St. Oran, which, from the special sanctity that seems to surround it, became the resting-place of the most illustrious dead ; nothing but ruins now mark the spot where these stately piles and holy places once stood, but sufficient may be gathered from the tombs and the fragments still left, to see that to this lone and far off isle were brought the bodies of the mighty kings of Norway and Denmark ; and to this retreat, down to, if not later than, the period of the murdered Duncan, were sent the remains of Irish and Scotch kings, and those most turbulent barons, the MacDonalds, who, as 'Lords of the Isles,' assumed and disputed sovereignty with the kings of Scotland, nearly all lie buried here. In more remote ages Iona seems to have been an important Druidical centre, the metropolitan seat of that most mysterious creed, that committed nothing to writing, but made its disciples and stones the living and only books of its philosophy and religion : it is likewise the place of sepulchre of those renowned kings and demi-gods of gothic history, whose deeds of prowess still live with us in Runic songs and Norwegian fables.

Gerald.—"It is quite evident that architecture in some form is coeval with man ; the Egyptians first brought it to some degree of perfection, the Greeks improved it, and we moderns have never surpassed them. To the Arabs, whose lively imagination could not be subject to rules, we are indebted for that kind called Gothic, which is seen in our sacred and other ancient buildings."

Mary.—"As none of the party have up to this time, alluded to the great Temple built by Solomon, I suggest it as one of the wonders connected with stones. In the first Book of Kings, we find a full description of the building ; of stones made ready before they were brought thither ; so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool was heard in the house while it was in building ; Solomon having four score thousand hewers in the mountains, and they brought great stones, and costly stones, and hewed stones to lay the foundation of the Temple of the Lord."

Harold.—"I am determined to write an essay on architecture. In no other way than by searching into many learned works of various ages, could we come to understand its orders, with their distinct characteristics. Rustic is not a regular order, but a method of treating all the others when executed with stones simply hewn. The earliest attempts in architecture prove they were carried into execution before its principles were known ; the art of uniting millions of small stones into one elegant and perfect structure was not then understood ; to cut a temple or hew a

tomb out of a solid mountain or rock, was then their one way to avoid the difficulty of uniting many stones in one ; they had no scaffolds to raise, no cements to invent, no powers to create capable of raising columns sixty feet high, without joint, into the air ; all that these excavating architects required was a model and sharp chisels, the beauty of their work being internal.

Gerald.—"You have indeed, Harold, chosen a grand subject in architecture ; it involves so much that is entrancing to eye and heart, from the days of this early excavating art, speaking through sculptured stone to barbarous tribes, and aiding in civilizing man, till Christianity came to save the world, to raise men from worshipping their own handiwork, to look through it to the Temple made without hands, and thus realize immortality. Architecture then became animated by a creed which opened the gates of Heaven, and sculptors, working in the spirit of inspiration, produced works still considered almost miraculous, inventing cements and discovering metals for uniting stones and elevating them hundreds of feet in the air. So architecture ceased to bore her way into the obstinate mountain, and turned the stony rock into a quarry, which enabled her to find materials to add beauty to use, and rear those glorious works still triumphing over time.

Grandmamma.—"The subject embraces such heights and depths, touches so many of our truest sympathies, involving much correct and classic lore, that I fear we must wait until Harold's essay is

finished, even in a degree, to understand its history. Enough has been now said to prove the superiority of Christian over classic art, and that as Christians we start from a loftier platform, and are raised by communion with God to a purer atmosphere, in which we see all around us in the light of eternity ; consecrating the very stones into meanings and shadows of deeper truths. Few will dispute this who have really soared into the symbolic heaven of a gothic church, and renewed their vows there, or shared the cross and the palm, the warfare and the triumphs of the Church of all ages, in the unity of the spirit. But are the victories of the Christian Church won easily ? do the walls of this world, like those of Jericho fall down at the mere sound of the trumpet ? Not thus is the way opened for saints and martyrs. Let us take the first in that glorious band, St. Stephen, who, sustained by that light from above, the heavens opening to his stedfast gaze as he looked up in that perilous hour when, on his declaring the vision to the maddened crowd, it but hurried the stones still faster against him ; till his death by stoning, sent his spirit free into His Saviour's presence, and that glory so miraculously vouchsafed to him at the moment his body was crushed to the earth with stones."

Kathleen.—"To the end of time the tomb has been consecrated by our Blessed Lord's most precious Body resting in the one hewn out of the rock, and to the mouth of that tomb we read Joseph 'rolled a great stone, and departed.' When the weeping ones

were saying 'Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre,' lo ! angels had descended from heaven and rolled away the stone, for it was very great, and sat upon it."

Grandmamma.—"Therefore we may trust that the lowliest tomb (in which the sleeping dust of our kindred lies, and over which our Redeemer watches and waits to awaken it into life,) is more truly sacred than the empty sepulchre of our Blessed Lord ; for the body that had once been the temple of the Holy Spirit, and which shall yet awaken and rise a glorious one, must be more a relic of our Redeemer than His forsaken tomb. So instead of, like the Magdalene, stooping and looking into the sepulchre weeping, let us raise our hearts and hopes to the risen Lord, the first fruits from the tomb, and listen for the echoes of His voice, trusting we shall yet be numbered amongst the living stones in that Spiritual Temple of which He is the chief corner-stone, that precious stone and sure foundation cut without hands."

Mary.—"In the description of Jerusalem the Golden, we read of walls of Jasper and foundations of the walls garnished with all manner of precious stones, sapphires, emeralds, and amethysts ; but you all should read to-morrow the full account as given in the twenty-first chapter of the Book of the Revelation.

Norah.—"I suppose we must leave to Gerald's and Harold's essays, the explanation of much respecting stones and their uses, with walks through the Catacombs ; where every footstep taken in the corridors of

my brightness gladdens the eyes ; I tell of safety and of peace, of tempests coming, and tempests over. I have filled the heart with dread and despair, and yet I ever remind of Him Whose "Triune Shadow" I am, and Whose slightest breath can still the whirlwind's roar. No doubt I am a thing of mystery and proof of Heaven's eternal truth and unchanging laws ; a monument of mercy, that the youthful world's gray Fathers attentively watched for, each hour, in trembling fear ; and when viewed by finite beings from any part of this world, however dim, low, and distant their light may be, they can see in me what so many in cold unbelief deny "Three in One, and One in Three." I have been the constant witness to prophecy ; earth yields her incense to me ; the lark sings welcome to my glorious stately march, as fresh and young in my beauty as when first from the Hands of the Most High. Age has not made me turn pale. The Church has called me her mystic wing ; a link from heaven to earth. While this world lasts I remain unchanged ; and slightly as the curtain of Revelation is raised respecting the unseen world, it is sufficiently so to see me there ; and I am to accompany one of the mighty heralds from that world to this earth in the latter days. Despise not this wonderful sign ; everything around us is an enigma ; reject not a fact which may solve this one ; veil not your eyes from either visible or revealed light, but allow it to shine, and you will find a key to open my mysterious casket of Truth."

Grandmamma.—"The real meaning of enigma is

either writing or speaking on some well-known subject or word, but using in the explanation such contradictory terms, that the wit and ingenuity of man are well exercised in finding out the hidden sense which being so well disguised even very wise brains have been puzzled. In the East, both in ancient and modern days, enigmas have been used, and every nation has shewn a love for them ; much even of the deep learning of the Egyptians is said to have been conveyed through their medium ; the ancient oracles spake through them, and also those of the Jews. But this last of our set of enigmas, is a mystery in itself, which I dare not attempt to explain, but I accept it in faith ; for we must never allow the conceit of intellect to hinder us from worshipping truth set in a mystery.

Gerald.—"This long preface of Granny's is to make us feel how different this one is from the five Enigmas already solved."

"And also," said Harold, "that we are not to venture on safety-valves in form of essays and treatises to explain the nature of this new wonder."

Edgar.—"Yet I am sure Granny will draw something more lovely and bright from the subject than any of the others, because 'the Hand that made me was Divine.'"

Mary.—"Noah had scarcely raised his altar and sacrificed on it to the Lord, for his safety on coming out of the Ark, when God threw the graceful arch over that altar, saying, 'I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant be-

tween me and the earth ; and it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will look on it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.' ”

The whole party were so taken by surprise at the way Mary so modestly proved she knew the new subject, “ Rainbow,” that for some moments, lost in the grandeur of the scene she had pictured of the stone altar on the desolated earth, the glorious arch (that compound of the noon-day light), the Triune shadow of Jehovah overhanging it, that they were silent.

Gerald.—“ The Rainbow, which is light analyzed, is composed of but three colours—blue, red, and yellow—no one of these mixed or made from others, and in their union producing colourless light, a good symbol of the Trinity.”

“ Yes,” said Mary, “ neither can be explained by us ; one we gaze on with the visible, the other with the eye of faith, and accept both as mysteries.”

Harold.—“ Therefore proving the folly and useless waste of time, or even worse, presumption, for even the wisest man to attempt explanations of the Rainbow. All that I can venture to express is that an artificial Rainbow can be constructed by mechanical means, throwing water in a contrary direction to the sun, and its beams falling by reflection on the drops as if on rain, thus the seven colours are made out of the three original.”

Grandmamma.—"These words of yours, Harold, are the only ones of this nature I can permit, for if we do draw much from this subject it must be in a most reverential spirit, and quite different way from the other Enigmas."

Gerald.—"As we do not mean to attempt describing its size, weight, or any other vain imagination concerning this mystery, Granny won't frown at my saying, that in the Heathen Mythology "*Iris*," or the Rainbow, was the messenger of the gods. All the ancient poets speak of her surpassing beauty, and described that appearance in the heavens which we call the Rainbow, under the name of "*Iris*," being at a loss how to account for the noble arch. This goddess is a constant attendant on Juno, as she denotes the air. Mercury was the chief messenger employed to unloose the souls of men. So *Iris* was employed to do the same office for women, of which we have an example in Dido, to whom when dying, *Iris* was despatched by Juno, according to the gods. *Iris* differs from Mercury, for he was sent both from heaven and the infernal regions, whereas she was sent from heaven only. *Iris* is given full employment by Homer, and she often is said to summon the winds, and is represented flying downwards to deliver messages; having a noble glory round her head, surrounded by clouds and a veil, which she holds with each hand, and which circles over her head; they signify both the arch she presides over, and her being one of the inhabitants of the air; she has also wings to shew her dispatch. All the an-

cient painters invariably represent her as illuminated by the lucid bow that is arched over her head."

Harold.—"How true it is that nature ever surpasses art! even the Iris in the dew drop, is just as perfect an Iris, as the bow that betokens the safety of a world from deluge."

"I always," said Kathleen, "seem to be the one for introducing plants or flowers into the Enigma conversation when the part requires their assistance, so I cannot allow Iris to take wing without naming the Iris flower (of which there are more than thirty species), so called from their brilliant and divers colours resembling those of the rainbow. These beautiful flowers were named after the fair messenger of the gods, and Iris was always the bearer of sweet and good news."

Edgar.—"I often heard our Uncle say that sailors regarded the Rainbow as a warning or good omen according to the time it appeared, for "The bow in the morning is the sailors' warning: the bow at night is the sailors' delight."

Norah.—"Heaven is symbolized sometimes by a circle edged with the three colours of the Rainbow."

Mary.—"Yes, the Holy Trinity is symbolized by the three-coloured Bow encircling our Saviour, Who is the visible form of Deity, and Who is represented as seated on the Rainbow. See Rev. iv. 3; Ezek. i. 28."

Edgar.—"One can quite believe how anxiously the new world watched for the bow of promise to save them from a second deluge, and often as fearful hearts

looked up in distrust, they beheld the sure token of God's mercy to the end of time ; no old age spoiling the brightness and glory of her beauty."

Mary.—"Some might call it too fanciful but the Rainbow has been named the mystic wing of the Church, and I cannot avoid hoping (if God wills it on earth) that the time may come when all who name themselves of Christ, may be one, in faith, in hope, in baptism, and accept the mystery of the Holy Trinity shown forth in the bow of promise, which is the Triune shadow of Jehovah ; the Church's wing of safety ; and pray for that blessed time when one universal temple shall echo, Holy, Holy, Holy ; so let us meet this mystery in a spirit of faith and worship, not passing over it as a needless subtlety, not making it a topic for reasoning or irreverent speculation."

Grandmamma.—"Even, Mary, if your bright picture be not realized on this earth, if all should pass away, yea, even the very heavens be rolled away, as a scroll, still as the rivers of earth are separated while flowing to the ocean where they meet and unite, so may God grant it will be with all the followers of Christ, and that they may at last become one in the ocean of glory, finding the Rock of Ages is truly that great Rock under whose shadow the Saints have ever rested ; He being ours in the blessedness of His mysterious nature, ours in the undivided unity of the Godhead, ours in the ever deep mystery of the Trinity."

Harold.—"Granny tells us in every Enigma of her

continual wish to lead us from nature to nature's God, but in this Enigma she has taken us at once off earth and raised our thoughts and eyes to the grand arch and its Divine architect ; and I feel sure she will take us a step higher and show us where to find another Bow, little as the curtain of revealed truth on this view has been raised, for mortal eyes to see."

Mary.—"It is now 1800 years since the heavens have been opened, (save to the departing spirits they have received,) or the eyes of men have been granted a glimpse of what lies nearer than the heavens, the Hosts of God ministering to mortals ; for Angels and even glorified Saints have not been exclusively confined to heaven. Moses and Elias revisited this earth on the Mount of Transfiguration. St. John speaks of a visit from one of the glorified Prophets of the Lord, paid to him on the Isle of Patmos, 'And I John saw and heard these things. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the Angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the Prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book : Worship God.'"

Kathleen.—"We may almost believe

'That if our eyes were purged to trace,
God's unseen armies hovering round ;
We should behold, by Angels' grace,
The four strong winds of heaven fast bound.'"

Mary.—"Saint John looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven, and he heard a voice saying, 'Come up hither, and I will show thee things which

must be hereafter ; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on it, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone ; and there was a "rainbow" round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.' "

Grandmamma.—"Many have attempted to be wise above what is written, but such should teach us very great carefulness, modesty, reverence, and a simple dependance on God's teaching us through His Holy Spirit's aid ; for we read in the Preface of the Revelation made to St. John the Divine, that blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, revealed to our brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, when he, John, was an exile in the lone Isle of Patmos, and in the spirit on the Lord's day, and told to write the things which he had seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. Therefore it is not wrong in us to think on these things and consider over these wonders."

Gerald.—"I have read some remarks that said God's being represented by the white transparent jasper stone, denotes His Holiness and Glory ; the bloody-coloured sardine denoting His justice and fiery indignation against His enemies ; and the 'emerald rainbow' round the throne, representing the covenant of grace as ever in the Triune God's eye. This rainbow being a reflection of the earth, which God so loved, and whose universal robe is green ; the colour emblematic of hope."

Harold.—"Without naming half the symbols we hear of, I must allude to a few ; St. John is represented by the eagle, and also by the four rivers issuing from the Mount of Paradise."

Edgar.—"Perhaps this last may be taken from the vision St. John saw of four Angels holding the four winds of earth, that the wind should not blow on it, but everything should glide on peacefully like a river."

Gerald.—"Well, Edgar, I think you are gliding into imagination."

"There is no doubt," said Harold, "of the Holy Trinity being symbolized by the three coloured bow encircling our Saviour, and also by the three rays of light, radiating from the Head of Christ."

Gerald.—"And the Atonement of Christ by the Cross ; God the Holy Ghost by the Dove ; and one of the many symbols of God the Son, by a Rock. In the last day our Saviour will be the hiding-place from the wind, the covert from the storm, the shadow of a great rock, and under this rock we shall dwell in quiet rest for ever. The Church triumphant is represented by the New Jerusalem, which we have but a dim sight of now, until that mighty angel St. John saw in vision comes from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a 'rain-bow' on his head, proclaiming, 'There shall be time no longer.' When we shall see immediately after this mighty herald, our Redeemer coming forth to judgment, and hear the songs of angels, archangels, and all the blessed company of heaven, echoing

around ; while, springing from their tombs, rise a mighty throng to meet the hosts from above."

Grandmamma.—"The Apocalypse to us seems full of enigmas and mysteries, but could we fully read them, they are but delineations of the Church of the future,—that great Temple of the Lord, where the one universal echo of His love, in the only one vast temple, through the endless eternity of the one continued Sabbath, re-echoes for ever and ever."

Mary.—"And this Temple is 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone : in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord : in whom we also are builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit.'"

Harold.—"St. John also tells us in his vision of the Temple of the Lord which was opened in heaven, that the angel said, Rise, and measure the Temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein, but the court which is without leave out ; denoting, some think, that there would be a smaller number in the inner court, that it would bear measuring, such as the outer one could and would not."

Edgar.—"St. John not only saw but heard ; I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps ; and they sung a new song before the throne,—that great white throne with the Rainbow round it, and before Him Who sitteth upon it ; and no man could learn that song, but the redeemed from the earth."

Gerald.—"You have recollected well, Edgar, these words from the Holy Scriptures, and truly this subject is best described in such words only; and by echoing that voice which came out of the temple, saying, 'It is done.' And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake that every island fled away, and the mountains were not found; and there fell upon men great hail out of heaven, every stone the weight of a talent; and another angel talked with St. John saying, Come hither, and I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's Wife (the Church). And he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain, and showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal."

Mary.—"We read of a white stone being given as a symbol of pardon or acquittal in Rev. ii. 17."

Grandmamma.—"Where, in the Sacred volume, is the Trinity so plainly shown to us?"

Mary.—"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

Edgar.—"This voice from heaven at the baptism in Jordan, was the same heard on the Mount of

Transfiguration, and its echoes reach to us ; echoes of God's voice, no angel's, but God's."

Mary.—"Yes, truly God's voice, as our Blessed Lord said, 'It was indeed a voice' which they heard spoken, not so much on His account as on theirs ; 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"

Grandmamma.—"I have written, dear children, many thoughts for both worlds, a crowd of facts and fancies, with many mysteries ; but Infinite Power has built up the framework of all above and around us ; and Infinite mercy and love glowingly fill, and give warmth, and lustre, and life, to everything, and that felt Presence of God everywhere. In search of magnificent wonders we need not wander far ; wonders in the earth and heavens. In the silence of midnight with that noble curtain above us, and its orbs pursuing obediently their paths, there is a deep solemnity which falls on the spirit, that may resemble the awe felt by the patriarch when he heard that low rustling wind, believing it to be the footsteps of his Creator."

Gerald.—"No matter how many thousand steps we ascend they leave us but in air ; God stands supreme as the 'Mystery of mysteries,' One in Three, Three in One."

Kathleen.—"At the risk of telling what everybody knows, I venture to allude to the story of St. Patrick and the carpet of trefoil leaves."

"Yes ;" said Grandmamma, "even in the earliest days of the Church, there were people (as now) calling

themselves her children, and denying her truths ; because they object to accept what our Father gives in and through her teaching ; and prefer trusting to their own unsafe judgment. But the simple fact of St. Patrick and the trefoil is this : many of his disciples set up their opinion against his preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, they even mocked and said, ' How can One be Three ? how can Three be One ? ' The Christian missionary (it is said of) first calmly looked to heaven and prayed for guidance, and strengthened in that earnest appeal for light, he turned his eyes to earth, and said to the Irish by whom he was surrounded, God has carpeted your Emerald Isle with an illustration of what I am vainly trying to explain to you ; and plucking a Trefoil or Shamrock leaf, showed the mystery of ' Three in One ' in its remarkable form ; and from thenceforth the leaf became one of Ireland's symbols."

Mary.—" It is that want of faith and trust that causes so much unbelief in the world, and that when we can't dive into mysteries causes us to reject them ; numbers look more at the thickness and weight of the waters and clouds, than at the thin slight narrow bow of promise ; they would like to feel the strength of that shadowy arch, and because they can't do this or see the Hand that set it, they are ever fearing that the clouds will bring back the Deluge."

Gerald.—" The clouds only vanish with time, here we still must see through a glass darkly ; but we have learned that there is nothing dark behind them,

only much to be revealed which is too good for us yet to understand, too bright for us yet to see."

Grandmamma.—"In reading the glorious visions of St. John, it is difficult to say, whether he beheld counterparts to the Church on earth, or types which served her under apostolic guidance for her framework. I am inclined to think the same Divine instinct guided both, and taught angels in heaven and saints on earth, to adore and to love with the same outward expression; so forming but one worship, one Church; for heaven worships now the nature of man united with the Godhead. Earth adores the Deity joined to our humanity in the person of our Redeemer; hence is our worship and theirs one—one in object, one in feeling. This communion of Saints is the true essence of Divine worship; there is an altar in both, beneath which the slain for Christ rest; one choir, one song, one voice, one heart, one hope, one life; but in some manner these services differ: theirs is perpetual, uninterrupted, unceasing; the thrice repeated Holy, echoes ever through the golden vault, while we only at intervals unite in worship; if we believed in our hearts what we confess with our tongues, we should feel that the Church is the House of God, and gate of Heaven. May God grant when at last the heavens shall open to us, it will be for the receiving of us up into that same place whither our Saviour has gone before."

"We do not know," said Mr. Desmond, "the particulars of St. John's dying hours; early Church history tells us it was a peaceful end. Like Moses's

grave, no one knows for certain where he is buried, nor are we told who was near his dying bed : but there was one Friend who we feel sure was present, his Divine Lord and Master, Who, seeing the disciple whom He loved waiting at the foot of His Cross to see the terrible end, had directed that henceforth he should be as a son to the Blessed Virgin Mary ; and we read, from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. This is proof sufficient to show us that St. John and all disciples whom Jesus loves, will never be forgotten ; no not even their dust, for the Saviour Himself will watch over it all till that bright morning when He shall draw the blue curtain of the skies, and revealing a sun that never sets, call us to the ceaseless praise of eternity."

Gerald.—" It was during the time of St. John's exile and persecution, that he was given those wonderful revelations and communion with heaven ; and after his endurance of trials and sorrow, he has gone to his rest, and bids us follow in patience ; though dead he speaketh, and the lower the clouds of affliction hang over us, teaches us to remember those great and mysterious revelations of the kingdom above."

Mary.—" There is something beautiful in the idea I lately read, ' That a Communion Feast connects the Cross of Jesus and the Crown of Glory, that the crucified and the glorified are both associated with the blessed festival : ' so that, like the rainbow St. John alludes to round about the Throne, one end rests upon the Cross, then vaulting into the sky, sweeps

past the Throne of Intercession on which Jesus sits, descends again to earth and rests upon the Crown ; thus forming the track by which the Saviour rose, and along which He will again travel ; proving that the mercy and love commenced on Calvary will only end when the kingdoms of this world become one in the kingdom of our God and of His Son, Who shall reign for evermore."

Grandmamma.—"If we do solve some mysteries, what are they in comparison of deeper mysteries still hanging over all things? and no doubt the handwriting on them will never fully be interpreted by us ; for who can say that has looked on the monuments of a bygone world—those fossil relics, marking the early progress of our earth—but must feel it bears on its dark bosom the germs of that life which in coming ages will bud and blossom. But time, as we view it, has nothing to do with these changes : we have been tracing the works and footsteps of One who is above all time ; of One to Whose infinite capacity a day is as a thousand years, and the lifetime of the entire human race but as the moment which dies with the tick of the clock that marks it, which is just heard and passes. Let us pray for some of that Dove-like spirit that brooded over chaos. The influence of that spirit can alone trace all the links in that vast chain which unites the eternal past with the fleeting present. Far as ever our ken can reach, assisted by faith and Revealed Truth, there is still and ever must be between us and the Highest, a mystery. Sometimes we do take wing above earth, which is not wholly forbidden,

provided we go with unsandalled feet as if the ground were holy."

Harold.—"When I have wandered amongst ruins and looked on glorious works of art, seen the Three in One carried out in the very shape and building of the stately abbey, they seem to stand as links between heaven and earth, temples, holy places guiding us (as landmarks to the traveller) home. And when I have turned from these noble piles erected in the name of the Holy Trinity, and looked on the sculptured tomb or simple ivy-wreathed cross marking some dear departed saint's dust, I have shuddered in the midst of the ruins, thinking of death and corruption in the tomb, until the well-known thought came to whisper to me, that The Firstborn from the Dead stands over the grave of all, proclaiming, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life; I am the Light of the world and eternity also; the everlasting life of every deathless soul.'"

Mary.—"Your words, Harold, remind me of some lines I read this day :

'Oh, there is sunshine in the thought,
That those whom sin so low has brought,
Sleep on in holy ground;
Sleep, where their friends and brethren sleep,
The Cross their guardian,
Silence deep, and angels watching round.
By many a grave this inward ray,
Hath chased the burial gloom away,
(Prayer breathing all the while,)
Hath flashed on snowdrops clear;
Lit cross and mound with its own hue,
And made the heart's desert shine.'"

Grandmamma.—"It is quite time to end, not only

this Enigma, but this as the last of the promised six ; the moral, instead of being kept for the finishing, seems to have been running mysteriously all through it : perhaps some of the party may have thought it too much like a sermon for recreation hours, but the close of a year gives us back the spirits of its dead, and time echoes the history of its bygone hours ; the heart calls up its affections and counteth its lost treasures, noting all that stirred its troubled waters. I have done my best to weave facts and mysteries into a web to catch information for recreation hours. If I first struck an earthly lyre, I raised you gradually to a Seraph's golden Harp : if I made the deep-toned Passing-Bell tell that death had freed another soul, was it not the earthly echo of the heavenly sentence, 'It is appointed unto men once to die?' if I took you great heights into the air, and kept you there as long as it was possible to hang between heaven and earth, I gently brought you down again to earth, and so formed an Echo which resounded in heaven ; and if before that echo reached its very highest echo of praise, I kept you wandering amongst ruins and rocks shivered into Stones, it was but to raise them again into altars and temples to the Most High ; and when even art had her limits, I then directed your eyes to an 'Arch' thrown by the 'Great Architect' of this most wonderful world over it ; accepting it as a mystery, but drawing all we have just been discussing from this deepest Enigma of all. But were I to say even a few words on the Rainbow seen in heaven, it

might lead me on to an inexhaustible and loved topic with me, and one that the youngest of the assembled party has with the others frequently professed belief in, namely, that line of the Creed, 'the Communion of Saints;' words that must be taken literally if we believe in the reality of the connexion existing between every member of the Holy Catholic Church above and below. I quite believe that there is a Church of all the Saints, and that it is the great temple: but as I have written a short tale on this subject, that some day I hope to read to you all, it makes me more willing to resign this loved mystery now."

"Oh! Granny," said more than one voice, "so you write stories as well as enigmas?"

"Yes, dear ones, I have done so frequently," said Grandmamma, "noted down facts and scenes I witnessed on sea and land in my journey through life; and as you all came over to my old Irish Castle for Christmas, and collected such mysteries out of this Ebony Room, perhaps when all the essays and treatises you each intend writing on the enigmas are finished and read; I may, next Summer, pay a visit to your English home, and take over 'My Manuscript Box,' which contains a great variety of subjects, some tales—some enigmas—perhaps some very interesting but little known—ancient customs, almost enigmas, which can't be solved; and who need grieve if some remain so? Let them be enclosed spots, quietudes in creation that must for ever be unexplored, unpenetrated. Who that has felt the soft healing power

of evening can regret that even in the world of mind, there are regions into which faintness and weariness may flee and take shelter and repose, away from the scorch and glare of light? sweet mysteries amongst whose gentle shadows of hope and fear and many unnumbered yearnings advance and form images of purity and immortality—vistas of a long life to come, through which the soul can wander more freely than at present. So let the curtain of night fall; it prepares a dawn when man's weariness has ceased, and his soul will be refreshed and restored for ever. But these words 'to come,' convey to every heart more than words can tell, of hope. Our hearts echo them, the very heavens repeat them, and aspiration wings its way over the arch, that Triune shadow of Jehovah, and rejoices in everlasting echoes."

The curtains of night the landscape shade,
The voices of earth in silence fade;
But there's a land where life hath no shadow, no care,
How many thousands are worshipping there?

THE END.

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